

THE AEROPLANE BOYS SERIES

A CRUISE IN THE SKY

ASHTON LAMAR





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HE TOOK THE TILLER AT TIMES. (*See page 113.*)

A Cruise In The Sky

OR

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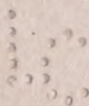
BY

ASHTON LAMAR

*present.
Sayler, Harry Lincoln*



Illustrated by S. H. Riesenberg



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A CRUISE IN THE SKY



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A Cruise in the Sky

OR

The Legend of the Great Pink Pearl

CHAPTER I

A FLORIDA METROPOLIS

All afternoon the train had been following the picturesque shore of the Indian River, in Florida. The snow and ice of the north had long since disappeared. Summer heat increased as the train sped southward. Most of the seats in the car were filled with tourists on their way to Palm Beach. Two persons, both from their looks and actions, were not destined to that aristocratic winter resort.

In one of the sections were a woman and a boy. The latter, about sixteen years old, was begrimed with dust and smoke, but there was a snap in his eyes. In the fast gathering dusk, he sat, his nose mashed against the window and his eyes shaded by his hands, as if anxious to

catch every detail of the strange land through which the train was flying.

The woman glanced out of the window now and then in a nervous manner, and, at last, when it was almost wholly dark and the porter had begun to turn on the electric lights, she touched the boy on the shoulder.

“Look at your watch again, Andrew. We must be almost there.”

As the boy drew out a watch (his father’s, lent to him as a safeguard on the long trip), his lips puckered.

“Twenty minutes!” he exclaimed, almost in alarm. “We ’re due at Valkaria at 8:15. It ’s five minutes of eight now.”

“O, dear, I hope they won’t forget to stop,” said the woman, with increasing nervousness. “Hadn’t you better speak to the conductor again? I don’t know what we ’d do if we were carried past our station.”

“I know,” answered the boy, with a laugh. “If they forgot us, they ’d have to bring us back for nothing. But the conductor won’t forget. I ’ve pestered him so often about it that I guess he ’ll be glad to get rid of us.”

“I never thought about it being dark when we got there,” the woman went on, as the lights

in the car turned the outside world into blackness. "I suppose we 'd better not try to open up your uncle's house to-night." She looked out into the deep shadows of the palmettos. "We 'll go to a hotel or boarding house to-night."

"What 's the use?" argued the boy. "That is, unless you are too tired. It 'll be a useless expense. I 'd like to find the house to-night, if we can. Someone can show us. Every one in the town 'll know where Uncle Abner lived."

"We must go to Captain Anderson first," replied the woman at once. "He is the one who wrote to us of your uncle's death, and sent the body to us for burial. He has the key to the house, and he was your uncle's friend."

"Maybe their homes were near together," suggested the boy hopefully. "I guess it is n't a very big town, and it won't be very late. We can go to a restaurant and get our supper and then find Captain Anderson. He can take us right to the house to-night. It 'll be kind o' like campin' out—"

"Camping out?" interrupted the woman. "I hope not, although," and she smiled faintly, "that would just suit you."

The boy only laughed and again tried to make out the landscape.

“Well,” he said at last, “even if it ’s on the main street of Valkaria, it won’t be far to the river, and that ’ll be something.”

“What do you think it will be like?” asked the woman as she gathered her bag and wraps together.

“I don’t care much,” replied the boy, dragging his suitcase from beneath the seat, “just so it is n’t too fancy—I don’t want to be mowing lawns all the time, ’specially in January.”

Just then there was the hoarse sound of the locomotive whistle, and, almost with it, the grinding of the quick set brakes. As the woman and the boy sprang to their feet, the train conductor hurried into the car and the porter sprang forward to help with the baggage of the anxious travelers. As the other passengers aroused themselves in surprise at the unexpected stop, the woman and the boy were hurried to the platform and, the long train scarcely coming to a stop, assisted precipitately from the car.

Instead of landing upon a depot platform, the two suddenly disembarked passengers found themselves on a sandy incline, slipping slowly downward into a dry ditch. They were con-

scious that their bag, suitcase and wraps had lodged somewhere near their feet. Scrambling to upright positions, they both turned only to see two fading green lights marking the fast disappearing Lake Worth express.

"Andrew!" exclaimed the woman, clasping the boy's arm.

"Looks like they 've dumped us into nothin', mother."

"It 's gone!" the woman almost shouted.

"Gone?" repeated the boy. "You bet she 's gone, and gettin' goner about a mile a minute."

"What 'll we do?"

The boy laid his hands on his mother's arms.

"Looks like a mistake. But don't get scared. Let 's look about. If this is Valkaria, I reckon it must be the outskirts of the town."

"The trunks," cried the boy's mother. "And they 've taken our trunks. What are we to do? Something awful is sure to happen to us."

"It has n't happened yet, mother. And I can begin to see something. What 's this?"

On the far side of the ditch, a dark mass outlined itself in the night. While his mother protested, the boy clambered up the bank. Then a peal of boyish laughter sounded in the still night.

“It ’s all right, mother. We ’re right in town. This is the union depot. It ’s an old box car. And here ’s the sign on it—‘Valkaria.’ ”

There was a half hysterical sob, and the boy rushed back to his frightened parent.

“Don’t be scared, mother. It ’s all right. This is the place. There ’s bound to be someone near. Brace up.”

Just then the hoarse croak of a frog sounded, and the woman broke into tears. The boy, attempting to pacify her, began another survey of his surroundings.

“Look, mother. It ’ll be moonlight in a little while. See!”

As he pointed to the east, they could make out the glowing rim of the full moon just sil-vering the waxen tops of the encircling palmet-tos. Composing herself somewhat, the frightened woman allowed the boy to help her through the loose sand to the makeshift depot.

Along the front of it ran a rude, tramp-hacked bench. On this, the two seated themselves. The depot-car was doorless. As the boy observed this, he laughed again.

“Why, this is n’t bad, mother. We can sleep in here—”

“In there?” protested his mother. “There

are insects there, I know. I 'm not going to move from this bench till daylight. Then we 'll take the first train back to the north."

"It may be our mistake, mother. Maybe Val-karia is n't a town at all. I reckon it is n't, judgin' by the depot."

"Why should they call an old car 'Val-karia?'" exclaimed the woman. "Cars don't have names. They have numbers."

"I give it up," answered the boy, with some cheerfulness. "But I don't see that it 's so bad. The weather is fine. I 'll bet it 's dandy around here in the daytime. That moon 's makin' things kind o' great, now."

"What 's that?" exclaimed the woman, suddenly catching her son by the arm and pointing in the direction in which the train disappeared. "There! Across the railroad!"

The boy had seen it too. A broad, ribbon-like band of chalky-white extended from the black shadow of the palmettos on the left, crossed the track, and lost itself in the blackness beyond. As the boy looked he caught sight of similar thin strips along the track.

"It 's sand, mother. Looks like a ghost, but it 's white Florida sand. And I 'll bet it 's a road. Let 's try it. If it 's a road, it goes somewhere."

Anything was better than the black, noisome box car. The boy made his way into the now half illuminated ditch and collected the scattered baggage. Laden with it, the marooned travelers set forward. As the boy surmised, the white strip was a road. When they reached it, they discovered, to their relief, safely lying in the gully beyond the crossing, their two trunks.

"Better get 'em out o' the ditch, in case o' rain," said the boy, and, despite his years, the well-muscled lad tackled the job. It was not an easy one, but, by rolling and sliding, the heavy parcels were soon landed on the edge of the soft roadway. The moon was now shining so brightly that the lad could make out the time. It was 8:35 P.M.

"Now," said the lad, mopping his face, "we can go toward the river or away from it."

"Perhaps the town is on the river," suggested his mother, more composed. "We'll try—there's a light," she added excitedly.

Far down the white strip of road was certainly a light. From its low, regular swing, the boy at once concluded that it was a lantern. He so informed his mother, who immediately became newly panic-stricken.

"It may be robbers," she gasped, clutching her son's arm again.

"Robbers don't carry lanterns, mother. Let's hope it's the hotel runner or transfer man."

"Or tramps," added the woman in a frightened whisper.

"Look here, mother," answered the boy soberly. "You know the only way for us to get out of this mess is to find someone to tell us where we are and what we've got to do. There is certainly someone coming toward us. Do you want to meet whomever it is, or run away and hide in the bushes?"

"I suppose we ought to wait," answered his mother meekly.

"Wait nothin'," exclaimed the boy. "We'll march right up to the relief party."

Leaving their baggage in the road, the boy took his mother by the hand and, despite her alarm, marched her forward along the road. The suspense was soon over. In a few moments, a figure emerged from the shadows. While it was yet a hundred yards away, the anxious boy, partly to keep up his courage, sang out a bold "Hello!"

"You folks get off that train?" was the response in a man's voice.

“We did,” answered the boy. “Where’s Valkaria?”

“Valkaria?” repeated the approaching stranger good-naturedly. “Why, you’re right on the main street now.”

The man, who by this time had reached them, was unquestionably neither robber nor tramp. He was past middle age, well but roughly dressed, and wore a yachting cap on top of a good growth of silvery white hair, which lay above a face bronzed by the sun and wind.

“We are from the north,” hastily explained the woman, “and we are looking for the place where my brother-in-law, Mr. Abner Leighton, lived—”

“Then you must be—”

“Mrs. Howard Leighton, of St. Paul. And this is my son, Andrew. We have come—”

“I understand,” interrupted the man quickly. “I wrote to your husband. My name is Anderson—Captain Anderson. Why didn’t you let me know? We’d have met you. I heard the train stop, and I wondered what it meant. So I came up to see. I’m glad to meet you.”

“And you live here?” began Mrs. Leighton, as Captain Anderson shook hands with her and Andy. “You can’t imagine how relieved I am.

But are there any buildings—a hotel or boarding house?”

“Yes,” continued Andy. “We’ve got all this stuff scattered along Main Street, and have n’t had any supper, and as for sleepin’—”

Captain Anderson laughed and picked up his lantern.

“As for your baggage, we’ll take care of that in short order. Your uncle and I were friends for many years. His house is over on the other side of the railroad. You can’t go there to-night. My place is down here on the river—”

“But, Captain—” began Mrs. Leighton.

“Young man,” interrupted the captain, ignoring Mrs. Leighton’s protest, “take this lantern and start right down the road with your mother. I’ll be after you as soon as I find those grips. You’ll eat and sleep to-night in the Anderson house. There is n’t any Valkaria but a signboard.”

CHAPTER II

THE STRANGE WORK OF A WILDERNESS EXILE

Captain Joe Anderson's real home was in the north on one of the great lakes. As a young man he had devoted much of his time to yachting. Therefore, when he and Mrs. Anderson sought a winter home in the south, he built his bungalow on the wide, baylike Indian River.

To this salubrious spot Captain Joe and his wife hastened each fall. With no servants, Mrs. Anderson saw to the few household needs. Living on the shore of the biggest and most beautiful body of boating water in America, Captain Joe gave every daylight hour to sailing and making boats.

Just to the left of his trim little cottage was a low, wide building. Therein, when summer came, Captain Anderson stored his boats. These ran from his well-known sailing yacht "Valkaria," down through smaller craft for fishing and cruising to three or four skiffs or rowboats. He had no power-boats and, as

Andy Leighton soon learned, had no patience with those who owned or operated them.

At this time of the year, with his boats safely moored at the long pier, which extended 150 yards out into the shallow river, the boathouse was a boat shop. Here, when he was not on the water sailing with Mrs. Anderson, Captain Joe was busy, slowly working into shape some new water craft. Some days, when it rained or a norther brought a chill to the balmy spot, he would kindle a fire in the big stove in the boathouse, and, his tools lying idle, sit and read.

Before Mrs. Leighton and Andy had even come in sight of the light in the Anderson home the captain had rejoined them.

"I don't know how we are going to repay you for your kindness, Captain Anderson," Andy's mother began.

"I know one way," answered their rescuer good-humoredly. "Your brother-in-law's home is n't much of a place, but if you and your son can see your way to livin' there awhile each winter, that'll be all the reward I want. It gets pretty lonesome down here sometimes for Mrs. Anderson."

Then the two older persons began to ex-

change talk about their northern homes and possible mutual friends. At the first opportunity, Andy broke in:

“Captain Anderson, what did my uncle do down here? I suppose he raised oranges.”

“Your uncle was a peculiar man,” answered the captain. “I liked him. But I never could understand why a good lawyer should bury himself in the wilderness.”

“Father says he used to be a fine lawyer,” commented the boy, “but his health failed.”

“And like a lot more such people,” added Captain Anderson, “he got to livin’ alone and bein’ so much alone, he got sort o’ peculiar.”

“One could tell that from his letters, when we got any,” interrupted Mrs. Leighton. “He used to write about some invention on which he was working.”

“An engine,” broke in Andy. “Father told me my uncle thought he had an engine that was to do wonderful things. Did it work?”

“Oh, his engine worked all right,” answered Captain Joe soberly. “There was n’t any trouble about that. That was n’t his real weakness. He made engines that ’d work just as long as he ran ’em like other people, with steam or gasoline. But steam and gasoline did n’t

suit him. He was lookin' for some other kind o' power; something cheap and light—calcium something I think it was."

"Gas from calcium carbide?" suggested Andy impulsively.

"Yes, that 's it—calcium carbide," went on Captain Joe, "though I never took any stock in it and never paid much attention to it. He said when he got his generator finished, he 'd be able to carry his power in a little tube."

"And did he?" persisted Andy, pushing forward. "Did he finish his generator?"

Instead of replying at once, Captain Anderson dropped back by Mrs. Leighton's side.

"Madam," he said soberly, "the doctor said your brother-in-law died o' heart disease. But there was enough other things in that shop o' his to kill him,—gases and fumes and odors,—and if I had a guess about what ended his lonesome life, I 'd say it was as much that idea of his as a weak heart. If he ever got at the bottom o' what he was lookin' for," added Captain Anderson, turning to the eager Andy, "I reckon no one 'll ever know unless he wrote it down. And there 's nothin' o' that sort so far as I know."

While Mrs. Leighton made further inquiries

concerning her late relative Andy's brain was beginning to burn with a sudden and new curiosity. Andy's father was a factory foreman, and the family lived in a modest home in a city suburb, but the boy had already finished the second year of high school. Andy had all the dreams, desires, and determinations of the average boy. But he had something more—a decided bent for mechanics.

Only the summer before, Andy and a classmate had made a single-cylinder gas engine. It did n't happen to work when completed, but that did n't matter. The making of it had given Andy a good knowledge of engines. Like many an older person, he was already theorizing on a new motive power. Anyway, he knew what Captain Joe meant when he spoke of "calcium something."

"Captain Anderson," said Andy, breaking in on the talk of his elders, "is it too late to see my uncle's shop to-night?"

"It 'll be too late when we've had some supper. But in the morning I 'll turn over the key. Everything is there just as Mr. Leighton left it—except the engine he made two years ago, and that 's in my boathouse."

"Does that one work?" persisted Andy, eagerly.

"It does, with gasoline," returned the man. "That 's the one your uncle made for the aero-catamaran. I'll turn that over to you—I have n't any use for power-boats."

"Aero-catamaran?" exclaimed Andy. "What 's that?"

"That?" repeated the captain. "Why,—but here 's the house."

"Tell me just one thing," pleaded the excited boy. "Is the aero-catamaran a boat?"

"A kind of a boat—or was," laughed the captain.

"And it belonged to my uncle?"

"I made the boat, but your uncle made the engine, and I gave him the boat—no power-boats for me."

"Can I have it?" blurted out Andy.

"Andrew!" broke in Mrs. Leighton. "What do you mean? I'm ashamed of you."

"I meant," began Andy, abashed, "that I'd like to see it and—and run it."

"Of course," laughed the captain. "I understand. Well, anyway, it's no use to me. I know nothing about engines."

Just then the party reached the cottage. Mrs. Anderson waited for no introductions. In a few minutes Mrs. Leighton and Andy were

seated in a summery living room. While Mrs. Leighton protested over the unexpected hospitality and Mrs. Anderson removed her guest's wraps, Captain Anderson could be heard starting anew the fire in the kitchen cook stove.

"We have n't any guest chamber," explained Mrs. Anderson, with a laugh; "but you," taking Mrs. Leighton by the arm, "will share my bedroom with me. Captain Anderson will sleep in the boathouse, and the boy can sleep on the couch in this room."

Their hostess had already led Mrs. Leighton into the adjoining room. So Andy improved the opportunity to look about. The room had a sort of seaside air. Within an unusual fireplace of stone, stood the model of a schooner-rigged yacht. On the mantel was a large silver cup, apparently a prize or a trophy, while at the right and the left of it, were large pink-hearted conch shells. On the wall above was a decoration of pink, yellow, and purple West Indian sea fans.

While the highly interested boy was noting these things, Captain Anderson reappeared.

"I reckon mother can see to something in the way of eatin', Andy," he said with a laugh, "and we'll just about have time to get the trunks."

As the boy responded with a laugh of his own he pointed to the sea fans on the wall.

“They don’t grow here, do they?” he asked.

“Those?” said the boy’s host. “Oh, no; they came from the sea gardens near Nassau. Mrs. Anderson and I usually sail over there each spring—for a change.”

“From here?” asked Andy.

“Why not?” responded the captain, with a smile. “But I suppose you don’t know that the Indian River is only an arm of the sea. It runs all along the coast like a big inland lake, and there are several places where you can get out to sea.”

“And Nassau,” repeated the open-mouthed Andy—“where’s that?”

“I reckon I’ll have to get down the map for you,” answered the amused captain. “Nassau is the only town in all the three thousand or more Bahama Islands. And it’s about two hundred and fifty miles from here. But you can strike the Bahamas long before that. In one place they’re not over eighty-five miles from America.”

As Andy’s eyes contracted, a mind reader would have detected these thoughts already linking themselves in the boy’s brain: “work-

ing engine, boat, Indian River, ocean, Bahama Islands.”

“I guess I know what you’re thinkin’ about,” ventured Captain Anderson, with a mischievous laugh. “And if I ’m not mistaken, in the next few days there ’s goin’ to be a pretty busy boy around these parts.”

“Well,” answered Andy, with a similar smile, “wherever I am, I ’m not in the habit of takin’ root. And I won’t need a gong to get me up in the morning.”

By the time the man and the boy had secured the broad-wheeled trundle cart that Captain Anderson used in transporting freight, and had gone for the trunks, Mrs. Leighton had refreshed herself by removing the stains of travel, and Mrs. Anderson was well forward in the preparation of a supper for the strangers.

“It ’s a long way to haul the trunks for just over night,” said Mrs. Leighton, as Captain Anderson and Andy carried them onto the gallery.

“It ’s the easiest way,” explained Captain Anderson. “When you want to send them to Mr. Leighton’s house, we ’ll take ’em by water. Goat Creek empties into the river just above

here, and it winds back right past your brother-in-law's place. I'll have to lend Andy one of my rowboats."

"Supper's all ready," announced Mrs. Anderson. "We have n't any real milk or cream, and no real butter, but we get used to substitutes."

With this apology she seated her guests to a repast of fried lake trout, fried yams, home-made bread, orange marmalade, guava jelly, tea, and by way of dessert, an enormous pineapple ripened on the plant. By the time the tired and hungry travelers had shown their full appreciation of Mrs. Anderson's culinary skill it was well after ten o'clock. Mrs. Leighton and Mrs. Anderson having arranged Andy's bed on the couch, they withdrew.

As Captain Anderson lit a lantern for use in the boathouse, Andy, a little embarrassed, whispered:

"Captain Anderson, can't I see those maps you were talking about—those that show where the Bahama Islands are?"

The captain, with a grunt of amusement, went to a rack and took down a chart.

"On one condition: you must n't stay up more than fifteen minutes."

With a nod of acquiescence, Andy—who had never seen the ocean, and who had not the slightest knowledge of boats—caught the map eagerly and hastened to the table on which was a big oil lamp. As Captain Anderson left the room he glanced back and saw the excited boy intently poring over an old chart of the Bahama and West India Islands.

CHAPTER III

A BOAT WITHOUT SAILS, SCREW, OR OARS

It did not require a gong to arouse Andy in the morning, but it did call for a gentle shaking from his mother's hand.

"Gee!" he exclaimed as he tumbled out of bed, "I 'm losin' time. But I reckon I 'd better wait till breakfast is over."

"Just what is all this hurry about?" asked Mrs. Leighton. "You must remember, my son, this is not a hotel."

"Yes, I know," explained the boy, "but there is so much to do to-day."

"Well, please don't get excited," said his mother with some severity, "we'll proceed with our own affairs when it suits our host and hostess. And remember, Andy, you are not to accept a boat from Captain Anderson as a gift."

"I understand," answered the boy, with an attempt to control his enthusiasm. "But, say, mother, look at this."

He caught up the map he had so eagerly ex-

amined the night before. His hair tousled, and still in his bare feet, Andy spread it before his perplexed mother. "Here, look," he went on, "all these things are islands, the Bahama Islands, the West India Islands—that's where everything comes from you read about—sponges and tropical fruits, bananas and things, and," he looked up, his eyes blazing, "we could go there if we had a boat—they're right over here—"

"Andrew," said his mother slowly, as she motioned him toward his undonned clothes, "you are here because your father couldn't come and because I couldn't come alone. When we have looked into your dead uncle's affairs and arranged them as well as we can, we are going back home. We are not going to the Bahamas."

"Yes 'm," answered Andy meekly.

"From the minute we landed here, you've been excited. You seem to think this is the beginning of some remarkable adventure. It isn't. It is a business trip."

"Yes 'm."

"Now, you quiet yourself, get on your clothes, and when we've had our breakfast and Captain Anderson is ready, we'll go about our

business like two sane persons. Don't let me hear anything more about engines, boats, or the West Indies."

"Yes 'm."

A little later, Andy, having completed his morning toilet, slowly wandered from the house toward the pier where Captain Anderson was making an early examination of his boats.

"Hello there!" sang out the captain. "I thought you 'd be out by sun up."

"I kind o' overslept," answered Andy sadly.

"Why, what 's the matter? Did n't you rest well?"

"Too well," was the boy's slow rejoinder.

"Well, don't worry about it. We 've got lots of time to talk over things. Did you lay out a course to the Bahamas before you turned in?"

Andy sighed and looked sorrowfully out over the river.

"Nothin' doin' in the Bahamas line," he said at last.

"You seem to be in the dumps," Captain Anderson remarked.

"I reckon you 'd be, too, if you had the trimmin' I just got."

"Trimmin'?"

"My mother thinks I 've been botherin' you too much. Have I?"

“Botherin’ me? How?”

“Oh, buttin’ in about engines, and beggin’ you to let me have that aero-catamaran, and talkin’ boats, and borrowin’ your map, and pesterin’ you about the Bahamas.”

“She don’t really believe that, does she? Why, Andy, I put all those things in your head.”

“She says we’re down here on business. When we attend to that, we’re goin’ back home. I’m sorry we had to bother you at all. I guess you can keep the aero-catamaran.”

The good-natured captain was shaking with laughter.

“Anyway,” he said, at last, with a chuckle, “she won’t care if you just *look* at the engine, and you’d better look at the rowboat I’m goin’ to give you—”

“Got orders on that, too. You’ve done too much for us already. I can’t take it.”

“Can’t, eh?” said the captain quizzically. “Why not buy it?”

The boy had his eyes fixed longingly on a staunch, flat-bottomed skiff, painted red, and carrying the name *Red Bird* in white.

“I don’t know that we can afford it,” he said in a hesitating voice.

“Well, of course, if I sell it, I must have my price,” went on the amused captain. “There ’s a little leg-o’-mutton sail that goes with her.”

“What ’s a boat like that worth?” Andy asked at last.

“Well, I ’ll have to figure,” answered his elder, puckering his mouth. “The stuff in her was secondhand, and I reckon it cost me \$1.50. Then there was the labor, say two days. We ’ll call it a dollar and a half a day—that ’s \$4.50 altogether. And about a quarter for paint—”

“And the mast and sail?” suggested Andy.

“Nothin’,” answered Captain Anderson. “The stick floated in, and the sail ain’t anything but a scrap.”

“Could you afford to sell her for \$4.75?”

“I could,” answered the captain, “but it would n’t be fair. A boat like that won’t last over five years, and this one is over two years old. She ’s two-fifths gone. Take her for three-fifths of \$4.75.”

When the boy had figured that it was \$2.85, his frown suddenly changed to a smile.

“Captain,” he exclaimed, “I almost bit. You ’re kiddin’ me. I ’d rather take it as a gift than offer you \$2.85 for a boat like that. No,” and his troubled look returned. “Nothin’ doin’ in the boat line, either.”

Captain Anderson made no answer to the boy's statement other than to smile again and to throw open the door of the boathouse. Within, and occupying a space about twenty by thirty feet, was a combined reading and man's living room, carpenter and machine shop, and general repository of all sorts of delightful odds and ends. To Andy the big room was redolent with a variety of fascinating odors—from fresh oak and pine shavings, oakum, pitch, and tar—new reminders of boats and the sea.

In one corner stood a desk, a bookcase jammed with volumes of many sizes, a cot, and a stove.

“My rainy day corner,” suggested the boy's guide.

On the opposite side stood two workbenches and a foot-power lathe, while, on the benches and above them on the wall, were tools of all kinds.

From the rafters, suspended on big wooden hooks, hung spars, oars, and strips of many kinds of wood. In the midst of these, resting on two special racks, were what appeared to be two racing shells, each about twenty feet long.

“They're part of it,” volunteered Captain

Anderson, as he saw Andy gazing in admiration at the fragile boats. "They 're the part of the aero-catamaran we made."

"And the engine?" asked Andy.

"Over here," replied the captain. "A little rusty, but protected as well as I know how. She has n't turned a wheel in over two years."

As he withdrew a tarpaulin cover the boy could not restrain himself. He burst out:

"Did my uncle make that?"

"You didn't suspect I did it, did you?" laughed Captain Anderson.

The boy was already on his knees. He didn't understand boats, but gas engines he did understand. For several minutes the excited boy hung over the motor; his fingers moved over its perfect parts. Then he sprang to his feet.

"Do you know what that is, Captain Anderson?" he exclaimed with all his former fervor.

"Your uncle called it a gas engine. But it always struck me as pretty light weight for an engine."

"Did it run all right?" asked the boy.

"Run?" repeated the captain. "She ran like a house afire."

"If that motor," said Andy slowly, "is as good as it looks, it is a better piece of machin-

ery than anything of the kind ever made in America. Why, we send to France for engines like that, and pay \$2,000 for 'em. Are you sure my uncle made it?"

"You 'll see his shop this morning," was the captain's only answer.

"He was two years ahead of the rest of the world," said Andy decisively. "Why, it's almost as light as a Fiat. Eight cylinders and water cooled," he went on, as if talking to himself. "Did he ever say what horse power it developed?"

The captain shook his head.

"Listen to those cylinders!" exclaimed the boy, as he tapped them with a pencil. "Thin as a drumhead. Auto-lubricating alloy for bearings, too," he added with increasing excitement. "And hollow steel tubing instead of solid — every atom pared away that can be spared. Captain Anderson," concluded the young expert, springing to his feet again, "I 'll tell you what this engine is—it's the most perfect aeroplane motor ever made!"

"Aeroplane?" repeated Captain Anderson. "Flyin' machine engine? 'Twas n't made for that. It was made to run a boat."

"I don't care what it was made for; it's an aeroplane motor and a beauty—"

“Will you gentlemen be good enough to come to breakfast?”

It was Mrs. Anderson, standing in the boat-house door.

Too excited to respond immediately, Andy continued:

“Why did he make such a light engine, if it was for use on a boat?”

“Well, here ’s the idea,” explained the captain, nodding to his wife. “Your uncle lived here nearly ten years. Finally he had to take to boating. But he hadn’t any more use for a sailboat than I have for a power-boat. So he rigged up a gasoline engine and a screw on an old hull, and began runnin’ aground on every bar in the river. That ’s when I had the laugh on him, because I knew the channels. At last he got mad. And one day, he figured out the aero-catamaran. Here ’s a plan of it,” added the captain, pointing to a scale drawing on the wall.

“It has air propellers!” was Andy’s immediate exclamation.

“Sure,” said the captain. “And *they* were all right; they made her hump, too.”

The design showed the two twenty-foot narrow boats (or racing shells) braced together

after the manner of East India catamarans. On the crosspieces, which afforded a deck space seven feet wide, a heavier frame was shown. On this, rising something less than a foot above the boat gunwales, rested the engine, from which a shaft extended sternward.

Beginning at the engine, and also extending aft, was another open frame six feet long and seven by seven feet in width and height. Shafted on each top rear corner of this frame was a six-foot propeller connected with the engine shaft by chain drives. In front of the engine the boat braces were decked and here, similar to an automobile steering wheel, was a wheel from which wires extended to the rudder at the stern of each shell.

"Why 'd you take her apart?" asked Andy at last, his voice full of unmeant rebuke.

"We didn't," explained Captain Anderson. "We made her just as you see her in the picture, and she did what her designer planned,—paid no attention to bars and reefs. She even gave the *Valkaria* a black eye, making sixteen miles on smooth water. But—"

"But what?" interrupted Andy.

"Everything was all right but the braces, the catamaran part. The first gale that hit her twisted her to pieces."

CHAPTER IV

THE SEQUEL OF THE AERO-CATAMARAN

Andy's busy brain was full of the aerocatamaran and the wonderful engine, but, mindful of his mother's admonition, he restrained his enthusiasm. It was agreed that all should start for the late home of the boy's eccentric uncle as soon as Mrs. Anderson's morning work was done.

"We 'll use both the little boats," explained the generous captain. "I 'll take the ladies in one, and we 'll tow the other one with Andy and the baggage for cargo."

The moment breakfast was over Andy managed to get the captain into the boathouse again that he might see the propellers—for he was still thinking. These, with the engine shaft, chain drives, steering wheel, and rudder wires had also been preserved.

"Are you thinkin' o' tryin' to rig her up again?" asked the captain, as Andy began a close examination of the parts.

The boy looked up with a doubtful smile.

“You could,” added the captain, “but she ’d have to be better braced. The trouble was when you turned her in a sea. The waves would raise one boat and drop the other. The steel beams would n’t hold.”

Andy nodded, and carried one of the six-foot propellers nearer the door. It was of some light, close-grained wood, finished as smoothly as glass. The blades, pear-shaped with a decided pitch, tapered gracefully to the metal shaft-block in the center.

“Where ’d he get these?” asked Andy admiringly, as he brushed the dust from the golden-varnished blades.

“I ’m a little proud o’ them,” confessed the captain. “I made ’em. But they were n’t my idea. I never saw anything like ’em until your uncle laid ’em out on paper, curves and all.”

“What ’ll you take for them?” asked the boy longingly.

“Did n’t I tell you all that truck is yours or your mother’s, or your father’s?”

“Did uncle pay you for your work?”

“Well, to tell the truth, it was n’t a question of pay between us,” explained the captain. “It was his idea and his boat. I made him a *present* of all I did.”

“You think so, now,” said the boy with a smile. “But I reckon what ’s here is as much yours as it was his—or more. Much obliged for the offer, but I think my mother would make a fuss if I took anything.”

The captain only shrugged his broad shoulders. In an instant the boy had replaced the propeller and was at his new friend’s side.

“Captain,” he said in almost a whisper, “don’t you say a thing to her. But I have an idea—and it ’s a dandy. It ’s a big idea, and it ’s goin’ to take both you and me to work it out—”

“Bully for you!” exclaimed the captain. “But it ain’t another motor boat, is it?”

For answer, Andy hurried to the captain’s desk and picked up an illustrated paper he had seen there. As he held it before the boat builder, he placed his finger on one of the pictures and glanced at his companion with snapping eyes.

“A flyin’ machine? An aeroplane?” the captain almost shouted.

For answer, Andy’s hand shot up as if warning silence. With the other he pointed toward the bungalow.

“My mother,” he whispered significantly.

“See that?” he continued, pointing to the pictured propeller. “And see that?” he added, indicating the motor. “They are the only hard things about an aeroplane. And we ’ve got ’em both!”

The captain’s mouth was wide open in amazement. He scratched his chin and then suddenly asked:

“Do you know how to make ’em?”

“Not yet,” answered Andy all aglow, “but the man who carved that propeller can build anything he wants. I’ve got a book about ’em—‘How to Construct and Operate an Aeroplane.’ ”

Perplexity shone on the captain’s face.

“Who ’ll fly it?” he asked.

Andy smiled, and then slowly winked an eye.

“But your mother?” added the captain.

“That ’s it,” answered the boy meaningly. “You ’re goin’ to make the machine; it ’s goin’ to belong to you—which it will. You ’ll have to hire me to help. Why not? We ’ll settle the flyin’ business when we get to it. How about it?” he concluded appealingly.

His companion shook his head.

“We ’d need a lot of things we have n’t got—or *I* would,” and he grinned.

“We won’t need a thing but what ’s right here in sight,” pleaded Andy, “except some cloth and steel wire.”

“I suppose we could get them up at Melbourne—or *I* could,” conceded the captain, his grin broadening into a laugh.

“Then it ’s a go?” urged Andy.

“But I don’t see,” argued Captain Anderson in new doubt, “just what benefit an aeroplane will be to me if we could make it.”

“What good was the aero-catamaran to you? You helped build that.”

The captain could only laugh outright.

“I reckon I did it just to be tinkerin’.”

“Well, you ’ll get tinkerin’ to beat the band buildin’ an airship,” exclaimed Andy. “Besides, there ain’t any law against *you* takin’ a ride in it.”

“Me?” exclaimed the captain. “Me? I’d sail the *Valkaria* from here to the Pacific. But I would n’t trust myself ten feet in one o’ these sky craft.”

The boy followed him outside the boathouse. They could see Mrs. Anderson and Andy’s mother ready for the trip.

“But I have always been sort o’ interested in aeroplanes—at long range. Bring me the

book about 'em and I 'll read up a little," added the captain, locking the doors.

"Then you 'll think about it?" persisted the boy.

"Certainly," was the captain's answer, "I 'll *think* about it. But that is n't promisin'."

As Captain Anderson and Andy walked to the pier to get the trundle-cart to carry the trunks down to the landing, the boy was surprised to see a colored man sitting on the edge of the runway.

"Hello, Ba," exclaimed the captain. "You're just in time, if you 're lookin' for a job to-day."

"Yaas, sah, Ise yo' honey," replied the negro. "Loafin' don't git yo' nothin' but conch meat."

Andy saw that the man had none of the flashiness of most colored men. His cheek bones were high, his skin was dusty black, his tremendously muscled and unusually long arms were in a marked contrast with his short bowed legs, and he wore neither hat nor shoes.

"Go up to the house and get two trunks. Then you can row us to Goat Creek."

The man was off instantly.

"Ba?" said Andy. "That's a peculiar name!"

“Short for Bahama,” explained the captain. “That ’s the only name he has. He ’s a Bahama man; turned up here a few years ago, and been hangin’ around the river ever since.”

“Looks as if he might have just stepped out of an African jungle.”

“His father probably did,” was the captain’s answer.

Ba needed no truck for the transfer of the trunks. He carried them to the pier, one at a time, balanced on his woolly head. Then the two ladies were seated in one boat and the other was tied astern to carry Andy and the baggage. But the negro, being a skilled waterman, took the captain’s place in the forward boat and the captain joined the boy in the other craft.

“Isn’t it great, mother?” called out Andy from the rear boat. “Let ’s stay all winter.”

“It is certainly beautiful,” answered his mother. “I wish your father could be here. But we can’t stay. You must get back to school.”

The boy glanced slyly at Captain Anderson and drew down his mouth dolefully.

“We ain’t got any time to waste on this thing, Captain. Can’t we start her to-day?” he whispered.

“Well,” answered his companion, slowly, “you can give me the book to-day. I ’ll see what I can make out of it. But—” and he shook his head again.

Undaunted by the captain’s hesitation, Andy fell into argument. He began with the simplicity of the aeroplane mechanically, and insisted that, aside from the engine and propeller, it was even less complex than a bicycle.

“Why, every boy in the country ’ll be makin’ ’em. You need only some light, strong wood and wires, and a few yards o’ varnished cloth, and there you are. I ’d take the engine home and make one myself this summer, only I know mother would n’t let me.”

“Would n’t it be sort of underhanded for me to make it for you?”

“Make it for yourself!” stoutly urged the boy. “Think of it! I can see her now—sailin’ off over that white beach o’ yours like a—a—”

“*Pelican*,” suggested the captain. “That ’s our bird down here.”

“*Pelican*—sure!” said Andy. “That ’s a great name—Captain Anderson’s *Pelican*. And say,” he whispered, leaning forward, “if you ’ll do it, so far as mother ’s concerned, I ’ll give my promise now never to try to fly in it until she says I can.”

“That seems fair enough,” said the man scratching his chin thoughtfully. After a few moments, a peculiar smile shone on his face. Then, very soberly, he said:

“Young man, did I understand you to say you understood something about gas engines?”

Andy, mystified, opened his mouth.

“I—” he began.

“That ’s what I understood,” said his questioner solemnly. “Did I also understand you to say you had some knowledge of the theory of flying machines?”

Doubly perplexed, Andy’s jaw dropped further.

“I—” he began once more.

“Very well,” went on Captain Anderson. “Then it ’s all settled. But I can’t pay you over a dollar a day, and as money is scarce down here, I ’ll have to settle in some other way. This is a pretty good boat we ’re riding in. It ’s worth about ten dollars. I ’ll give it to you, and deliver it in advance, for ten days’ labor.”

A yell rent the air. Mrs. Leighton and Mrs. Anderson whirled about regardless of their equilibrium.

“Andrew,” cried his mother, “what ’s the matter?”

“Nothing, mother. Only I’ve just made a good bargain. I’ve just bought this boat.”

“Bought it?” called back his mother.

“Yes—for ten dollars. We needed it.”

“And he’s going to work it out,” explained Captain Anderson. “I can use him whenever you can spare him.”

“That’s very good of you,” responded Mrs. Leighton. “But please don’t pay him more than he is worth.”

The only way by which Andy could show his gratitude and appreciation was to pat the captain affectionately on the arm, and then the mouth of Goat Creek was reached.

A few minutes later Andy was assisting his mother up the path leading to the little estate of his late uncle, Abner Leighton. Then he sprang down the path again to help Ba with the trunks. His thoughts were not on oranges, nor pineapples, nor his late uncle’s house. Nor did he pause to think of the laboratory shop and the power generator. A certain red book in one of the trunks, “How to Construct and Operate an Aeroplane,” blotted out all these.

“Andrew,” called out his mother, with a laugh, “I think I see one thing, already, that we’ll have to do.”

“What ’s that, mother?” panted the boy, as he tugged at his trunk strap.

“The house needs painting badly. I ’ll have you do that first.”

CHAPTER V

THE HOME OF THE ECCENTRIC EXPERIMENTER

Any lingering interest that Andy might have had in his uncle's place disappeared, temporarily, on the spot. He had figured that he might have trouble in arranging things so that he could help about the place and yet find time to help build an aeroplane. To be sentenced to "paint the house" was more than he had bargained for. The boy was in despair.

But as they approached the house, his interest began to revive. When he saw that his uncle's home was a substantial little building, backed by a grove of golden-studded orange trees, he began to forget his new trouble.

The house, two stories high, with a porch or gallery on two sides, stood on open ground.

"From the second story," explained Captain Anderson, "it looks out over the river. You can even see the spray of the ocean breakers on the other side of the peninsula, sometimes."

"The sea?" exclaimed Andy.

"And miles up and down the river," replied the captain, nodding his head.

The place contained about twenty acres, of which five in the rear were in oranges and one in pineapples. On the slope in front was a garden patch, while the low ground near the creek was a swamp.

“It is so much more than I expected,” exclaimed Mrs. Leighton at once, “that I almost wish we could keep it and live here.”

“Do you think we could afford it, mother?” Andy began. “I don’t think father will come down here.”

“What is it worth, Captain?” asked Mrs. Leighton.

“About two thousand dollars—maybe a little less.”

“Mother,” said Andy, “of course, we ought to clean up around here a little, but I don’t think we should spend any money on paint or repairs until father knows all about it. Let’s write to him.”

That meant perhaps a week’s reprieve. In that time considerable might be done on the projected flying machine.

“We’ll see,” answered his mother.

Mrs. Leighton and Andy entered the place with great curiosity. The front of the house was one living room of undecorated pine.

There was a stove standing in a box of sand, and a long table, a couch, and bookshelves built in the end of the room. A chair at the table and a handmade lounging chair with a canvas back were the only seating accommodations.

The table bore a big green-shaded student lamp, and was laden with books, pamphlets, magazines—all in order in little racks—and, in the center, a heap of blank books, scratch paper pads, dry ink bottles, pens, tobacco jars, pipes, matches, and newspaper clippings. On the walls, here and there, were attractive colored prints.

On the table Andy noticed several foreign magazines and reviews. A large portion of the contents of the bookcases were European scientific magazines. One of these, turned over on the table, was a German periodical devoted to chemistry.

On the far side of the room a steep stairway led to the second floor. While his elders ascended to the rooms above the boy opened a door in the rear. The scientific publications had instantly revived his curiosity concerning the shop or workroom. The door led into a small, bare room with a door opening on the side gallery—evidently a dining room. Beyond

this, was a kitchen and a door leading out on the orange grove.

A few yards within the grove, the boy found, in a clearing, the building that his uncle had used as a shop. It was of weather-worn boards, and had a tar-paper roof. The windows, on two sides of the shed, were almost continuous, and protected by shutters. The door, on a windowless side, was fastened with a padlock. But this did not long deter the curious Andy. Many kinds of pipe, bars of iron, empty carboys, boards, boxes, and barrels of hard and soft coal were about the shed. Catching up a piece of bar iron, Andy demolished the lock staple with a blow.

The spaces between the board siding had been filled in with laths and, as the shutters were closed, it was a moment or two before the prying visitor could make out his surroundings. As he began to do so he knew that Captain Anderson's suggestions were more than justified. He was plainly in the workroom of an experimenter of wide scope.

The intruder's first work was to throw open the wooden shutters. Then, despite the dust-covered windows, he began a quick inventory of the place. The side where there were no win-

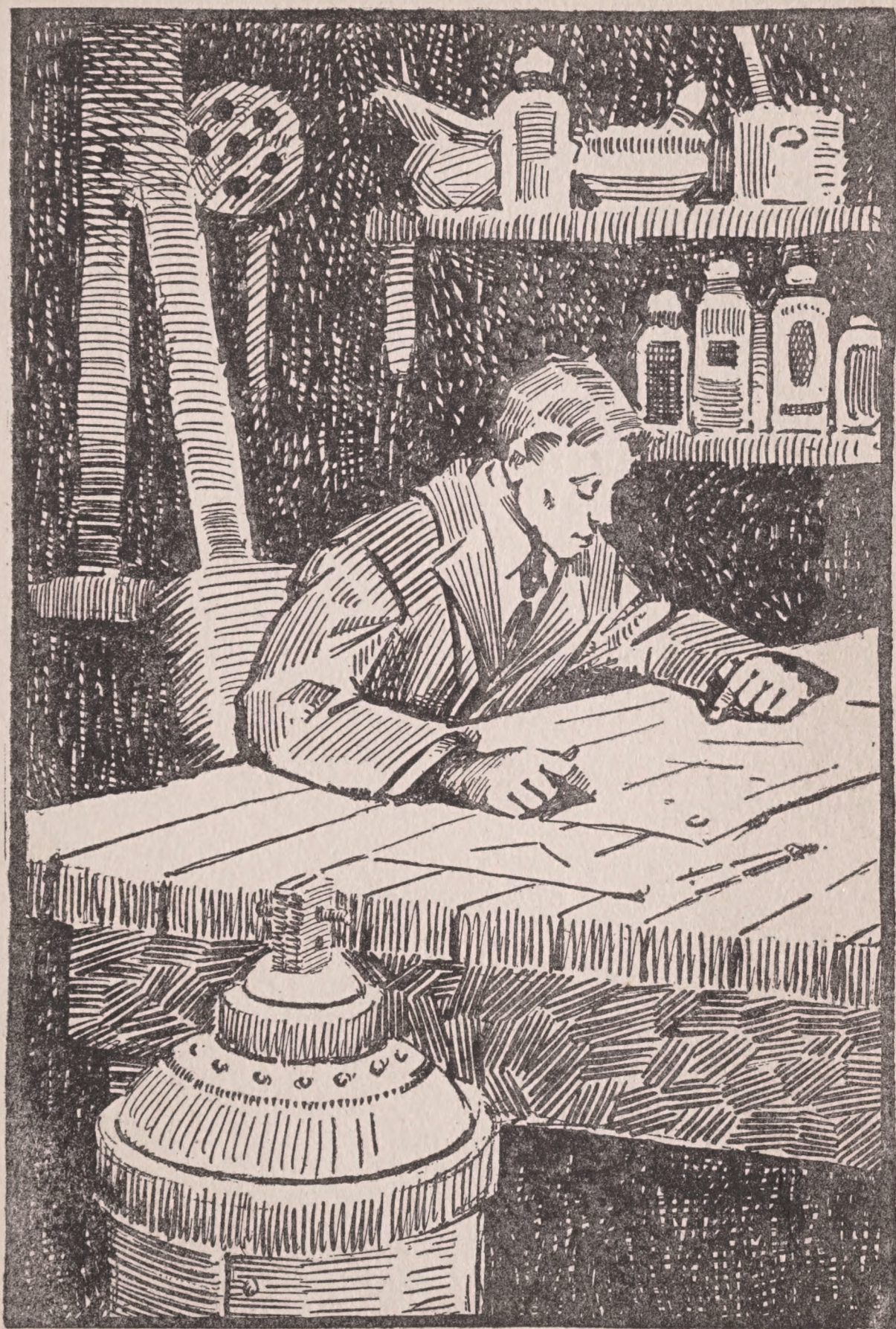
dows looked like the disordered shelves of a country drug store. Glass bottles and smaller vials, wicker demijohns, and labeled boxes were jammed together in confusion. There was an acid, mouldy smell about the place, as if sunshine and air had not entered for a long time.

Beneath the windows on the long side of the room was a little workbench such as watchmakers use. It was littered with tools looking much like a watchmaker's outfit. In a cleared place on it was tacked a sheet of paper, now brown with dust. In lead pencil, on this, were chemical formulae and algebraical equations. By its side was a box of drawing instruments, steel rules, drawing curves and dividers, with pens and drawing inks.

"Nothing much doing!" chuckled Andy to himself, smacking his lips. He reveled in places of this character. It meant many possible hours of prolonged examination and the joy of almost any kind of discovery.

On the right of this bench was a heavier one for metal working, with two vises and a lathe operated by shaft and pulley. The shaft extended through the side of the room and connected with a small gasoline engine outside.

Continuing his hasty survey of the curious



“NOTHING MUCH DOING!”

laboratory, Andy faced the other windowed side of the room. Crowded into a corner, he made out a portable forge. Next to it, was an anvil with hammers, tongs, and bending blocks. Next to this was another and still heavier bench.

It was the first close view of this that made Andy spring forward as if he had caught sight of a bed of gold nuggets. Hereon, plainly enough, were the physical expressions of the eccentric experimenter's peculiar ideas. Metal wheels, shafts, springs, cylinders, and pistons were heaped together. In front of them was a wooden, soot-smeared and oil-begrimed miniature model of something. The little model had somewhat the appearance of a mechanical fan. As Andy picked it up, a voice from behind him exclaimed:

“Could n't wait, eh?”

It was Captain Anderson, and he was followed by Mrs. Leighton and Mrs. Anderson.

“Where 's that power generator or transformer, or whatever it is?” was Andy's only answer as he replaced the model.

“Andrew!” exclaimed his mother, as she caught sight of the boy, whose face was streaked with dust and perspiration, and

whose coat was already covered with cobwebs. "You 're ruining your best suit. Come out of that dirty place."

The boy did so, but it was partly because Captain Anderson had motioned him around the shed. There, beneath a lean-to protection, was a fourth bench. On this, even the untrained Andy instantly made out six small cylinders connected by steel tubes, in the center of each of which was an arrangement of valves and stop cocks. Attached to the first of the cylinders was a compact device resembling a blower, operated by a hand crank. From this, a steel tube led below the bench.

"Don't ask me what it is," exclaimed Captain Anderson. "All I know about it is your uncle said that when he got those cylinders workin' right, he 'd have no more use for gasoline."

"Looks like a new kind o' compressor," began Andy, his face beaming. "I think I—"

"Andy, come right along up to the house and help us get things in order," commanded his mother. "Did you ever see so much rubbish?" she added, turning to Mrs. Anderson and gathering up her skirts anew. "All this stuff must have cost a lot of money. Is it worth anything

now?" she asked, peering timidly into the disorderly shop once more.

"The tools are worth something," answered Captain Anderson. "As for the other things, I guess they ain't good for anything except junk."

They were on their way back to the house, Andy tagging behind and thinking. Finally he touched the captain on the arm.

"Don't you be too sure about that 'junk' business."

"Did you find anything?" asked the captain, with a smile.

"I did n't," answered the boy, "but my uncle did n't keep that place goin' just to kill time. You can bet there are ideas buried somewhere in that stuff."

"And you are goin' to dig 'em up?" laughed Captain Anderson.

"There ain't any law against tryin'," retorted Andy, red in the face, "and if my mother tries to sell that shanty or the 'junk' in it before I 'm through with it, she 's agoin' to strike a snag."

The negro, Ba, had carried the trunks to the gallery, where a council was now held. The only food in the house was a few tins of fruit

and vegetables and some ant-infested sugar. The entire place was much in need of soap, water, and broom. The bedding did not meet Mrs. Leighton's approval. Besides, there was but one bed in the house.

The boy's suggestion to his mother was to "camp out" in the house until the next morning. There were preserved peaches and tinned baked beans in the pantry, to say nothing of oranges and pineapples on the place, and these Andy thought quite sufficient in the way of food. Then, on the following day, they would borrow Captain Anderson's sailboat and go to Melbourne to lay in supplies.

This suggestion receiving no immediate objection, the boy began to exercise his growing energy in his attack on the disorderly floor of the big room. In the midst of this Captain Anderson stopped him.

"You can't stay here," explained the elder. "Your mother has agreed with us, and you're going back to our house."

A look of disappointment spread over the boy's face. Then this changed as he turned to his mother.

"Then you ain't goin' to paint the house right away?"

"Not at once," was the answer. "Captain

Anderson has kindly offered to let us board with him for a few days until we hear from your father. Then, if he wants to sell the house, and we can't do it at once, we may make arrangements to come here and live."

Although it had been decided to return to Captain Anderson's home, and the trunks were carried back to the boat at once, it was nearly noon before the party prepared to leave. Two hours were spent in looking over the grove and the pineapple field, and in a more careful survey of the house and its contents. Then Captain Anderson prepared to lock the house again.

"Don't that road lead to your house?" asked Andy, who had been in new thought for some time, addressing the captain.

"Sure," laughed Captain Anderson, "want to walk? It's two miles."

"Mother," asked Andy, "do you mind if I stay here awhile? I'll walk back."

His mother eyed him suspiciously.

"What are you planning to do?" she asked.

"Just want to nose around—books and things," he explained.

"Can he do any harm?" Mrs. Leighton asked, with a smile. "I guess it's 'things' more than books."

“Let him stay,” urged the captain. “The place needs all the airing it can get.”

As soon as Andy saw that his request had been granted, he hurried to the boats and opened his trunk. He soon extracted a little red volume. As the returning party approached, he slipped the book to Captain Anderson.

“Captain,” he said quietly, “here ’s the book you wanted to see. I thought you might look at it this afternoon. Things are workin’ all right,” he added winking slyly. “I ’m on the job to begin earning that boat to-morrow—”

“What book is that?” interrupted Mrs. Leighton, who had her eyes on her son.

Andy hesitated, but Captain Anderson volunteered:

“It ’s a book about aeroplanes. He ’s lending it to me.”

“Aeroplanes?” exclaimed Mrs. Leighton instantly, turning to her son. Then, looking at the captain, she added: “I hope you ’ll keep it, Captain Anderson. Andy wasted one whole summer on an engine that won’t work. We don’t need any aeroplanes of the same kind.” Turning to Andy again, she said: “Be sure and be at Captain Anderson’s by five o’clock—and take in all that bedding before you leave.”

CHAPTER VI

AN UNFINISHED LETTER SOLVES A MYSTERY

Before the boats disappeared, Andy was hurrying up the hill.

“Talk about your hidden treasure!” said the boy to himself. “Lookin’ for concealed ideas beats it all hollow. Now for the steel cylinders—whatever they are.”

Passing the pump in the rear of the house, he realized that he was thirsty, and that reminded him that he was hungry. He thought first of the canned peaches and beans. Then he recalled the ripe oranges and pineapples. Ten minutes later, his face and fingers redolent of the combined juice of the two fruits, he was ready for his inviting investigation.

Throwing off his hat and coat, he sought, first, the bench behind the shop. He secured wrenches and screw-drivers and loosened some of the parts of the six cylinder machine. But, after all, he had to shake his head.

“Looks as if it is *almost* something,” he mused. “And it looks too as if it had *nearly*

worked. But I reckon it did n't. And, if my uncle could n't make it go, what 's the use o' my tryin'?"

Plainly it was a gas accumulator or condenser of some kind. It even suggested an attempt to make a device for liquefying gases. The parts were so rusted that even after oiling them, Andy could not operate them.

"I 'll pass that up for to-day," thought the boy finally, his face wet with perspiration and his hands greasy with oil and brown from the rust. "Now for the little model!"

He had a theory about the cylinders, but he had none about the model. In appearance, it resembled a wooden fan that the boy had once seen—a fan made by slitting half of a bit of straight-grained pine and then spreading the slit sections out like over-lapping feathers. In a way, too, it resembled a bird's tail. The device to which the fan-like pieces were attached was so contrived as to open and close the tail-like extension.

Andy carried the contrivance into the sunlight and carefully cleaned it. Then, by grasping the central wooden shaft with a pair of pliers, he found he was able to turn it. A little brass cogwheel on the shaft operated in two

smaller wheels, one on each side. These, working on a beveled gear, moved levers simultaneously but in opposite directions. It required but a few minutes to discover that turning the shaft to the right drew down the fan-like blades on the right-hand side of the tail-like part and, at the same time, elevated those on the left-hand side.

"I guess it's a toy," argued the boy. "Maybe the inside of an automatic bird. Anyway, it works just as a bird spreads its tail when flying."

Further examining the miniature combination of wood and brass, Andy made another discovery: the shaft not only turned both ways, but it, the beveled gears, and the connecting levers, worked forward and back. As the boy pushed the shaft backward, all the sheaves of the tail-like extension flew upward.

"It is a bird," exclaimed Andy. "It moves like a pigeon's tail when the bird starts flying."

Pulling the shaft forward, reversed the operation, and the sheaves dropped downward.

"There she is comin' down," the boy cried aloud. "I've got it. It's a new kind o' boat rudder."

What increased the resemblance to a bird's

tail was another ingenious device—two rows of small cones just above and below the narrow ends of the sheaves. Each blade, working upon a universal hinge, was free to move to the right and left. As they rose or fell under the pressure of the shaft, they pressed on the cones and spread out, fanwise.

Then came the crowning discovery. The shaft could be moved forward or back and turned at the same time. As Andy pushed it backward and gave it a twist to the right, the feather-like leaves depressed, assumed a diagonal line and spread out like a bird darting to the earth.

“Old junk, is it?” muttered the boy, as he carried the model into the shop again. “Maybe so. But, junk or not, I ’ll bet there ’s never been anything like that made before. And I ’m goin’ to find out what it ’s for.”

Although Andy had only partly investigated the fascinating mystery of the shop, he suddenly determined to have another look at the contents of the house. He was excited, hot, and dust-covered. Passing through the dining room, an unopened bottle of lime juice in the cupboard caught his eye.

“Might as well refresh myself,” chuckled

Andy, with a boy's hot-weather thirst. "A little Florida 'cup' is just about my size on a day like this," he went on; and rushing out to the grove, he secured three oranges and a small pineapple. A big glass pitcher was filled with fresh water. Into this, using his pocketknife, Andy sliced the fruit, and then on it poured a cup of lime juice, after which he took up the sugar box. It was alive with ants.

Spreading a newspaper on the table, the boy poured out a quantity of sugar. The ants did not abandon their banquet. They rolled out with the sugar. The boy scratched his head. Then he tried to chase the ants away. They were not easily chased. He got a little stick and began pushing them off the sugar. They went off one side and returned on the other. From scratching his head, Andy fell to rubbing his chin. Then he had a great thought.

"I 'll drown 'em," he said to himself.

Finding a shallow dish, the thirsty boy poured the sugar into it. The ants clung to their feast. He ran to the pump with the dish and filled it with water. The persistent ants were defeated. Those that did not escape the deluge by hasty flight were drowned at once, victims of their appetites. In a few moments,

the top of the syrupy bath was thick with overcome ants. A few sweeps of the surface with his hand, and Andy was free of his enemies.

"An' I 've got all the sugar without a speck o' ants," he chuckled again.

Dumping the sweetening into the pitcher the boy stirred up the mess.

"It tastes awful good," he said to himself, "but it 's kind o' sweet."

Just then a big brown ant floated out from under a raft-like slice of pineapple.

"But I reckon plain water 's pretty good on a hot day," he added less enthusiastically. Dropping the pitcher of Florida 'cup,' Andy hastened to the pump and took a deep drink of pure water.

Refreshed, he began systematically examining the living room. The bookshelves afforded a rich mine. From these, he advanced to the table where, manifestly, his uncle had done his reading and writing.

There was scarcely a thing here that did not give Andy a new thrill of joy. Everything seemed covered with writing or figures; sheets of paper, record books, piles of letters, engineering cross-ruled paper. One after another was put aside for later examination.

Then Andy came unexpectedly upon that which afterwards meant so much to him: the instant explanation of the puzzle of the little model. Opening a pad of letter paper, he saw written in a careful hand, several pages addressed to Mr. Octave Chanute, of Chicago.

Andy knew Mr. Chanute by reputation to be a skilled engineer and the father of airship experiments in America. He knew that it was Mr. Chanute's experiments with kites and gliders on the sand dunes of Indiana that had first interested the Wright brothers, and the boy glowed with pride to know that his uncle had been in correspondence with such a man.

The letter that the boy found he read breathlessly—it was dated at least two weeks before his uncle's death—and had not been mailed because it had not been finished. When the boy had read it twice and then stood, his eyes wide and his heart throbbing wildly, he made the resolution that he never wavered from, that turned the possibility of the making of an aeroplane into an insistent determination out of which came the *Pelican* in which Andy had his great adventure and in which he sought to solve, and did solve the mystery of the Great Pink Pearl.

The momentous letter read:

“MY DEAR MR. CHANUTE:

“I am glad you received safely the report of my observations on bird flight in this region. As I told you, I spent three days in the vicinity of Pelican Island making notes on, and photographs of, the movements of these birds in the air. I hope the report will be of some assistance to you in your inquiry into the problem of ‘soaring birds.’ One thing we all know, and that is that birds *do* rise or soar at times without any apparent movement of wings, tail, or feathers. How this is done is, of course, a puzzle to us all. Your theory that even in seemingly calm weather, when there is no noticeable agitation of the atmosphere, there may be a vertical column of rising air induced by imperceptible movements of the lower atmosphere, may be the explanation.

“I believe, as you do, that when we have found the explanation of how a bird ascends without the use of its wings, we will have made the longest step in conquering man-flight in the air.

“While it has no bearing on your present line of investigation, I cannot resist telling you

that the observations you asked me to make for you have greatly interested me in the subject of aviation in general. Always a dabbler in physics and fond of experimenting, I have been led into working out an idea of my own. While watching the flight of birds, I could not but be astonished at the wide difference between their tail motions and the rear rudder or tail of the aeroplanes as I have observed them in magazine pictures.

“I was so much impressed by this lack of resemblance that I yielded to the temptation to try to adapt the natural apparatus of the bird to man’s artificial flyer. I have even made a small model of a guiding tail or rudder for aeroplanes, patterned as nearly as practicable after a bird’s tail. Of course, I have no means of knowing how such an apparatus will work, but later I mean to send you some drawings, that you are at liberty to utilize as you see fit.

“These drawings will explain themselves. My object has been to secure a guiding contrivance that will not only alter the course of an aeroplane, but will at the same time equalize the darting tendency that I understand always follows a sudden turn to right or left. With it, I hope to lessen the need of flexing the

main planes of the machine when the rear rudder is used, a large part of the tendency to dart being absorbed, in theory at least, by the double action of my bird-tail rudder. The moving machine I hope may not only be steered up or down, or right and left, but one motion of the shaft will give the two movements which now must be made independently."

Here the letter came to an abrupt end.

"I knew it!" shouted Andy. "I knew it was a rudder of some kind. It ain't all clear to me yet. But one thing is clear enough. I can make a copy of that model. If it works, I'll finish that letter. But, if it does, the plans of it are n't goin' to anyone 'to do as he likes' with 'em. I'll have her patented."

Leaving the doors open, Andy raced through the house, and in a moment or two had again disappeared within the shop in the grove.

CHAPTER VII

THE FIRM OF LEIGHTON & ANDERSON IS FORMED

When the coming night fairly forced the enthusiastic boy from the shop, which he closed and made secure by driving the lock staple into the door jam again, Andy was a curious sight. With his coat on his arm, his shirt wet with perspiration, his hat and trousers smeared with dust, oil, and rust, his hands black and his knuckles bleeding from handling iron, wood, and tools—all of which he inspected, felt of, and stowed away again—he looked more like a helper in a machine shop than a newly-arrived Florida tourist.

By the time he reached the railroad on his way home, it was dark. The sight of an approaching lantern did not reassure him. When he saw that it was Captain Anderson, he broke out at once:

“It ’s all settled! I don’t care about that gas accumulator or compressor, or whatever it is—we ’ve got her tail!”

“Her tail?” queried the captain. “Whose tail?”

“Why, the airship,” sang out Andy. “We ’re goin’ to have the best one ever made. We ’ve got a tail for it—a guider. Did you read the book?”

“Never mind about that now,” admonished the captain. “You ’d better be thinkin’ of some good reason why you stayed so long. Your mother ’s a good deal put out.

“I ’ve been a lookin’ over things,” explained the boy. “My uncle must ’a been a wonder. That little model is the greatest invention of the age—”

“You ’d better invent a model of an excuse for your mother.”

“What ’s the matter?”

“Your mother had an idea that an alligator might have eaten you.”

But Andy’s look of disgust disappeared in the other things he had on his mind.

“How about it?” he persisted. “Are we goin’ to make the flyin’ machine?”

“That ’s quite a job,” answered the captain. “But I ’ve been reading your book.”

“Could n’t you do it?” exclaimed Andy.

“I reckon I could,” conceded Captain Anderson.

“We won’t need the rudder that you see in the book,” broke in the boy. “The thing I ’m tellin’ you about is goin’ to take its place. I ’ll make it up there in my uncle’s shop.”

“If—?” said the captain, with a smile.

“If what?” asked Andy, alarmed.

“If your mother ’ll let you,” was his friend’s reply.

Andy was silent a moment as the two hurried forward toward the house. Finally, with decision, he exclaimed:

“Well, she will. It ’ll be a shame if she don’t.”

Captain Anderson seemed amused, but not wholly convinced.

“I kind o’ glanced through the book, and I was sort o’ plannin’ if I had the stuff—”

“And have n’t you?”

“Pretty much all, I guess.”

“Then you are goin’ to do it; you will, won’t you?” pleaded the lad.

“Are you certain that engine ’s all right?”

“Sure,” shouted the boy; “why not? And I ’ll make the tail rudder! Hurrah!”

The captain laid his hand on Andy’s arm.

“Don’t get excited. I don’t want to do anything your mother might not like—”

“You leave that to me,” said the boy.
“She ’ll agree—in the end.”

But it looked as if Andy might have a pretty hard time placating his parent, judging by his reception. Mrs. Leighton was genuinely alarmed, but supper being ready and it being apparent to the eye that her son was uninjured by alligators, her pent-up lecture gradually lessened into a mild criticism. When the boy, with clean face and plastered hair, joined the others at the table, Mrs. Leighton postponed further admonition.

Mrs. Anderson’s Indian River oysters baked in the shell were sufficient to put everyone in a good humor. To Andy’s great relief, his mother announced that she had devoted the afternoon to writing letters: one to Mr. Leighton; another to the bank in Melbourne, in relation to her late brother’s affairs; and a third to a man in the same town who, her host had informed her, was a possible purchaser.

“Until I hear from your father,” she informed her son, “we will do nothing.”

Andy nodded approvingly, but there was much secret joy that he did not have to return at once; that he was free, for a time, to get his great project under way. The next thing was

to acquaint his mother with the aeroplane idea and to work himself into the scheme without arousing his mother's objection. As he ate, his brain was busy with a dozen ideas. They were rejected one after another, because each called for deception.

Finally, with no definite idea in mind, he repeated the story of the rudder model. With a wealth of detail and a dramatic climax, the boy worked his narrative up to the unmailed letter.

"And what makes me sorry," he concluded, "is that there it is, the very thing all flyin' machines need most. And nothin' to come of it."

"Why, that ought to be a patent," suggested Mrs. Anderson.

"A patent?" repeated Mrs. Leighton. "Maybe there 's a fortune in it."

"Yes," remarked Andy. "But maybe it won't do what uncle figured it will. A thing that won't work ain't much good if it is patented."

"We ought to try it," declared Captain Anderson earnestly. Then he added: "Let me have the model, Mrs. Leighton, and I 'll make a full-sized working copy."

"I 'm sure that would be putting you to a lot of trouble," replied that lady.

“Besides,” interposed Mrs. Anderson, “how are you going to test it after you get it?”

“Well,” Captain Anderson answered at last, “it looks to me as if it might be worth the trouble of a real test, even if I had to make a machine to test it.”

“You don’t mean an aeroplane?” broke in Mrs. Leighton.

“They’re very simple,” answered the captain, shrugging his shoulders.

“All that work to test a little model!” ejaculated Andy’s mother. “All that trouble to see if an idea is worth anything!”

“It would be some trouble,” explained the captain, “but you don’t get anything without some trouble—”

“I can help him, mother,” interrupted Andy, trying to suppress his eagerness.

But Mrs. Leighton shook her head, and the boy’s hopes died. Then his mother turned to the captain with a suggestion.

“I could n’t consent to that,” she began, “because Andy is too young to give much assistance. But, if you’ll let Mr. Leighton pay you—”

“I’ll tell you what we can do,” exclaimed the boy, with new hope. “Let’s go havers. If

Captain Anderson can make a thing out of that model that will guide an aeroplane, it 'll surely be worth something. Let 's all go partners: we 'll take half because it 's uncle's idea, and Captain Anderson 'll take half because he works it out."

Mrs. Leighton looked questioningly at her host.

"That 's fair enough," answered the captain. "But there 's one objection. I don't know much about engines. Andy knows all about 'em—"

"He knows a lot about one that won't run," recalled his mother with a smile.

"He knows enough," observed Captain Anderson significantly. "If you can spare Andy for a week or so to help me, I 'll go partners, and we 'll see what we can do."

"I 'm sure that is awfully good of you," exclaimed Mrs. Leighton, "and if you really think Andy can be of assistance, why, of course—"

"But who 's going to fly the thing?" broke in Mrs. Anderson. "Not you," she added, nodding toward her husband.

Andy's heart sank.

"It 'll be time enough to bother about that when we need an operator," laughed her

husband. "What 's the matter with Ba? He 's afraid of nothing."

"And sail away to the Bahamas, maybe," replied Mrs. Anderson.

The possibility of Andy becoming the aviator seemed not to have occurred to Mrs. Leighton. At her silence, the boy could hardly restrain a yell of delight over the adroit way in which Captain Anderson had managed the thing. As he half rose from the table, Mrs. Anderson's words fell on his ears.

"Sail away to the Bahamas!"

He dropped back into his chair, his mouth open.

"What 's the matter, Andy?" asked his mother.

"Matter?" repeated the boy absently.

"Yes. What is the matter with you? Are you ill?"

"Ill?" repeated Andy with a smile. "No. I was just thinkin'."

"Thinking? About what?"

"Just thinkin' how funny that 'd be—old Ba asailin' back to his home in the Bahamas in an aeroplane."

Mrs. Leighton, with a curious look at Andy, at last turned to Captain Anderson and said:

It will be awfully good of you to do that, and I 'll make Andy do all he can to help you. Only," and she smiled, "I hope, if you make an aeroplane, you 'll promise you won't try to sail it and that you won't let Mr. Ba risk himself in it."

"I 'll promise," replied Captain Anderson with a laugh. "And now, if the ladies will excuse us, I think I 'll go over to the boathouse and have a pipe, and Andy can come along to talk over the project. You aren't too sleepy, are you?" he added mischievously.

"I am pretty tired," answered Andy, with a yawn, "but I 'd like to come for a little while."

When the man and the boy had left the house, Andy, instead of shouting for joy, said to his companion very soberly:

"Captain Anderson, do you think I 'll ever get a chance to sail that aeroplane?"

"What else are we makin' it for?" grunted the elder.

About half past ten, Mrs. Leighton and Mrs. Anderson appeared at the door of the boat-house. Captain Anderson and Andy, coatless, the former with his exhausted pipe in his mouth, were leaning over a drawing board and talking in low tones.

"I thought you only wanted a pipe," began Mrs. Anderson.

"And I thought you were tired," added Mrs. Leighton.

"Here she is," exclaimed Captain Anderson, rising and exhibiting the drawing board on which Andy had roughly drawn the model of his uncle's rudder, "the celebrated 'Aeroplane bird-tail rudder, patent applied for, manufactured by Leighton & Anderson, Valkaria, Florida.' "

"I hope it is n't another aero-catamaran," commented Mrs. Anderson, with a smile.

As the ladies returned to the house and Andy prepared to close the boathouse, he paused a moment.

"Do you think he could, Captain Anderson?"

"Who could what?"

"Do you think Ba, or anyone else, could fly to the Bahamas in an aeroplane?"

"I don't know whether they could or not," answered the captain, blowing out the light, "but I do know that 'd be my idea of a real fool trick."

"Captain Anderson," continued Andy, as they walked slowly toward the house, "I've just been tryin' to figure out all that's hap-

pened since we saw your lantern comin' to meet us last night. Our engine may not go, and the bird-tail rudder may not work, and the aeroplane we 're goin' to make may not fly, but I reckon I 've found one thing in the time we 've been here that there ain't agoin' to be anything wrong about."

"What 's that?" asked the good-natured boat builder.

"You," answered Andy promptly.

CHAPTER VIII

ANDY FIRST HEARS OF KING CAJOU

Before ten o'clock the next morning, Andy, with the savage-looking Ba rowing the little *Red Bird*, had been to the Leighton cottage on Goat Creek, and was back with the model of the bird-tail guide and a box of special metal-working tools. By noon the projected aeroplane was under way.

While daylight lasted, Captain Anderson and his assistant applied themselves to selecting timber, roughing out the frame of the flying machine, with frequent conferences. From Andy's handbook, dimensions were readily secured, and that evening a working sketch of the car was made.

The following morning, Andy began a search for batteries. Those found at his uncle's cottage were practically exhausted. There was much that the boy would have to do at the forge in his uncle's shop in the way of metal work, but he was anxious that the batteries should be secured to test the engine.

“We ’ll have to get cloth, too, for covering the planes. We ought to have balloon silk, but that is out of the question. Good muslin will do—we ’ll waterproof it—I know how—alum and sugar of lead, equal parts in warm water—”

“I ’m afraid we have n’t muslin enough,” interrupted the captain.

“Certainly not,” exclaimed the boy, “nor alum, nor sugar of lead, nor batteries. So I ’ll go to Melbourne this afternoon and get ’em—it ’s only eight miles. I can be back this evening—”

“There ’s a nice breeze,” volunteered the captain, “and it ’s abeam. We ’ll have Ba sail the *Valkaria*, and you can take your mother and Mrs. Anderson.”

“Won’t you come along?” asked the boy, overjoyed, but feeling a little guilty.

“When I get set on a job,” answered the industrious captain, “I like to keep agoin’. I ain’t goin’ to let this one get cold on my hands. We ’ve got to have those things, so hurry along and get ’em.”

By one o’clock, the supply expedition set sail, with a long list of needed material. In a half hour, Mrs. Anderson and Mrs. Leighton being

comfortably busy with their fancy work well up in the bow, Andy found opportunity to interview the mysterious Ba.

“Ba,” he began, “did n’t you like it over there in the Bahamas?”

“Didn’ Ah like it? Ah liked it all right in de big town—Ah liked it in Nassau, but dey ain’t gwine ’low me stay dar.”

“Why not?”

“ ’Case I done had my trial.”

“What did you do?”

“Me? Ah don’ do nuthin’. Me an’ Robert was in de sisal fiel’ and dar was de machete. Dis Robert he done say de machete was hissen. An’ I done rutch ober and tuck it to gib it to him. An’ Robert he riz up an’ cut hissef on de neck. Ah don’ do nuthin’.”

“Then what?” urged the interested boy.

“De big judge he jes look at me, an’ den dey put me in de jail.”

“And you served your term?”

“Ah don’ know nothin’ ’bout dat. But Ah pushed de bars out an’ Ah comed away.”

“Did n’t you have a home?” asked Andy.

Ba shook his head, and his eyes widened.

“I ain’t gwine back to no out islands.”

“Out islands?” repeated Andy. “What are they?”

But Ba made no answer. He looked at the boy with narrowed eyes, and then gave his attention to the flying boat. After a few moments, still ignoring the boy's question, the strange black man, without facing Andy and in a new tone, said in a low voice:

"You ain't nebber gwine on dat Timbado Key, is you?"

"Timbado Key?" asked Andy. "Where's that?"

The slow-spoken Bahaman made no answer.

"Was that your home?" suggested the lad.

Again there was no immediate reply. Then, suddenly, in a whisper, the black said:

"Dat 's fetich. You ain't gwine dar?"

The boy nodded his head reassuringly. He knew what "fetich" meant—the African's sign of ill-omen. Alarmed over a fetich! Finally he went forward and asked Mrs. Anderson what she knew about the blacks of the Bahamas.

She told him that they were mostly descended from real Africans; that, in the days when slave stealing was being practised, it was the custom when slavers were caught by English or American men-of-war, to liberate the victims on the tropic Bahamas.

"There may be old men there now," she

said, "who were born in the wilds of Africa. And the second and third generation are not much more civilized. Ba is probably almost as much African as if he were living in the Congo," she concluded.

"Where is Timbado Key?" asked Andy.

Mrs. Anderson shook her head. "All the Bahama Islands, except Providence, are 'out islands.' This must be one of the smaller 'out islands.' I never heard of it."

When the boy returned to the stern he again attempted to learn from Ba why Timbado was fetich, and where it was. But there was only blankness on the boatman's immobile face. In a short time, Andy was to know a great deal about Timbado Key, but for the time he had to restrain his curiosity.

In Melbourne, Andy was greeted by a clerk from the general store. He had a message received by telephone from Captain Anderson. In addition to the things the boy was to get, there was a new list, which included more straight-grained and knotless pine.

The rather delicate question of who was to pay for the needed material might have embarrassed the boy and his mother had not Captain Anderson made it easy by assuming half the

expense as a partner and insisting on paying for the other half until Mr. Leighton could send a check for it.

The aeroplane architects were most anxious to secure a quantity of No. 12 piano wire for bracing the aeroplane, but as there was none available, Andy took an entire roll of the same size in plain steel. The next anxiety was that they might not be able to find needed turn-buckles for tightening the bracing wires. The store had a few—a little larger than absolutely necessary—and the town boatmaker had, fortunately, enough more to fill out Andy's list.

He searched the town for shoemaker's twist, but shoemaking seemed to have gone out of style, and he had to content himself with what approximated it, a skein of fine thread-like linen cord used by fishermen in making nets. As he could not get shoemaker's wax to wax it, he bought a cake of beeswax.

The selecting of the wood screws, which had to be of various and exact sizes, was a task that Andy relegated to the storekeeper while he visited the lumber yard.

"Spruce is really what we want," explained the boy to the proprietor, who also ran the livery stable, "but we 'll have to use pine—"

"Spruce?" exclaimed the dealer. "Then I 'm your boy, if this 'll do." He led Andy to a bundle of boards, 2 x 2 stuff, and some thin rib-like slats. "This is spruce."

"How 'd you happen to have that down here?" exclaimed Andy.

"I 've had it two years," answered the man. "I got it for two college boys from Boston, who were going to make two racin' shells. But they did n't make nothin' but a lot of bills and some quick tracks."

"I 'll take it all," broke in Andy, highly elated.

By five o'clock, the *Valkaria* was considerably lower in the water. With a fine burst of generosity, Andy conducted his mother and Mrs. Anderson back to the store, regaled them with some not over cold pop and a box of chocolates, bought a can of smoking tobacco and some new magazines for the captain, and with a couple of two-for-a-nickel cigars for Ba, assisted the ladies aboard the boat.

Ba was all smiles over the cigars. He appeared all smiles over something else, too.

"What 's doin', Ba?" joked Andy.

"Ain't nothin' doin'," replied Ba, licking his cigar preliminary to lighting it. "Leastways, ain't no wind. She 's a dead cam."

“Why, so it is,” exclaimed Mrs. Anderson, “and here it is five o’clock. Do you think it ’ll freshen up later, Ba?” she went on, with some concern.

“Ain’t gwine be no win’ dis eben, Miss Anderson,” was Ba’s verdict, as he rolled out an odorous volume of smoke.

“What in the world shall we do?” cried Mrs. Leighton.

Mrs. Anderson laughed.

“There is n’t any train, and we can’t walk. Ba,” she said to the happy Bahaman, “you ’ll have to pole us home.”

The obedient darkey, without any great gusto, however, began unlashng two long poles that were made fast to the deck alongside the washboard. Andy understood.

“Can you do that?” he asked. “Is the river shallow enough?”

“The Indian River is like a lot of people,” answered Mrs. Anderson, laughing. “It ’s not anyways as deep as it looks. And Captain Anderson has one weakness—he ’ll never leave his boat if he goes sailing. He ’ll come home in it if he has to push it every foot of the way. That ’s why we ’ve got the poles.”

Ba had already cast off and (having extin-

guished his cigar and stowed it away in his pocket), was getting the *Valkaria* under way. As the boat began to move, he walked along the deck gangway to the bow, and dropping the end of his twelve-foot pole to the bottom, rested the other end against his shoulder and began to walk aft. As he did so, the boat moved forward under the pressure of Ba's feet.

"Great!" shouted Andy, catching up the other pole. "That 's fun. We 'll get you home quicker 'n a couple o' canal boat mules."

Ba did not protest. Showing Andy how to alternate with him so that one of them was pushing forward while the other was returning to the bow, the colored man and the eager boy soon had the little yacht moving on her course.

Andy's black and blue shoulder was good proof the next day that he did his share. Ba crooned the songs of the "out islands" when the time dragged, and at last, after eight o'clock, Mrs. Anderson detected the pin-point light of the lantern she knew Captain Anderson would hang on the end of the pier.

The captain, receiving the tired stragglers with many a joke, showed his skill as a cook in the hot supper he had ready. The evening meal disposed of, it was a new pleasure to Andy, in

spite of his stiff limbs and sore shoulder, to help carry the aeroplane material to the boat-house, and almost a supreme happiness to sit in the light of the rising moon and recount all his experiences to his friend.

After a time, Andy went into the house and soon returned with the captain's chart of the Bahamas. Spreading it out on the desk, the boy began studying it intently.

"Got it again?" asked the captain laughing. "Well, I don't blame you. They're curious islands—"

"Where's Timbado Key?" interrupted Andy.

"Timbado? Oh, I see! Old Ba has loosened up. That's Ba's notion of a good place to keep away from."

"Why?" asked the boy quickly. "He would n't tell me."

"Nor me," answered the captain, freshly charging his pipe. "I've heard it's a place colored men never go back to a second time and that white men never go to even once."

Andy dropped the map, and Captain Anderson walked over and picked it up. He pointed to a nameless speck on the southern edge of the Bahama Banks.

“It ’s about here,” he indicated. “They told me over on Andros Island, when I put in there two years ago, that if you want to see real African savagery, you don’t need to cross the ocean—just go to Timbado.”

Andy’s eyes dilated.

“At other places there are white men, Englishmen and Americans, growin’ fruit and spongin’ and fishin’, but on Timbado, there ’s nothin’ doin’.”

“What do you mean?” interrupted the boy.

“Well,” went on the captain, “they *say*, mind you I just say they *say*, that there is a village o’ blacks over there bossed by an old African who thinks he ’s a king, King Cajou. And,” laughed the captain, “they *say* that old Cajou ain’t ever been cured o’ eatin’ his enemies—and sometimes those who ain’t.”

CHAPTER IX

A NEW IDEA IN AEROPLANES

As Andy Leighton prepared for bed that night, one idea possessed his mind. He would in some manner penetrate Ba's ignorance and learn the story of Timbado Key and its king.

Then he fell asleep to dream of a tropic isle whereon, beneath palms, a band of ghoulis savages, black, and clad in skins and feathers, knelt in groveling obeisance before a chief, their king, the cannibal Cajou.

His brain was yet full of these things in the morning, but the first smell of the shavings in the shop was an antidote; Ba and Timbado, for the moment, were put aside.

"Since I've got you started," said Andy to the captain, after an hour of replanning, "I guess I'll go over to my own factory. I'm goin' to make the wooden part of the tail guide here, but I've got to do the metal work, the cog-wheels, shaft-guides, and lever joints on the forge and lathe."

This was Wednesday morning. Friday even-

ing when the *Red Bird* returned from the Leighton cottage, it carried a box of shaft cogs and other metal parts. In the shop that evening, stood, in the rough, the frame of the future car—Captain Anderson's handiwork.

The spread of this frame was a little over thirty-six feet, and, despite Andy's fortunate find of spruce, the four horizontal beams were of pine, each cleverly spliced in three places with one-quarter inch stove bolts to a short, thinned under piece. But the stanchions holding the two planes together, and the struts connecting and bracing the front and back beams were of spruce, as were all the rib pieces. Pine weighs as much as spruce, but it is only five-eighths as strong.

Captain Anderson, having acquainted himself thoroughly with the plans, set about the actual work of construction in his own manner.

The four car beams were each 36 feet, 4 inches long. They were to be the basis of a car 6 feet deep and 5 feet high. After two of the light, slender beams had been laid on the floor, and the eight struts had been laid across them, the latter were made fast to the beams by liberal coats of glue and close winding with the waxed seine thread. The other beams were

treated in the same manner. This required a full day's time, and the big, fragile-looking frames were set aside to dry.

The next morning, Andy's impatience to test the engine could be no longer restrained.


"What's the use of an aeroplane, if that don't work?" he argued.

The engine responded slowly when started, stopped after a few revolutions, and then fell to work with an exhaust of thick, black smoke.

"What's the trouble?" exclaimed the captain.

"No trouble," answered the boy. "It's only oil in the cylinders—it'll be out in a short time. She's fine and dandy."

With regret, Andy shut off the engine to help with the other work. The task of connecting the upper and lower frames was then undertaken. Sixteen stanchions had been rounded and sand-papered until the wind-friction-corners had been removed. The ends of each of these had been slightly slotted. They were then set upright between the upper and lower frames, and, after being liberally painted with glue, screwed to the beams opposite each stanchion end. The attached ends were carefully wrapped with the seine thread, which was also glued, and another day's work was at an end.



“Kind o’ light and flimsy,” suggested the captain, when they finally quit work.

“Sure,” admitted Andy. “It would n’t hold at all that way. It won’t be rigid until we get the wire braces on. Then we’ll tune her up like a fiddle. This string and glue don’t do much but hold the frame together until we get the wires attached. They’ll brace her like a bridge span.”

The sawing of the spruce strips for ribs—pieces 6 feet long by $\frac{3}{4}$ inch thick and an inch wide—was the program for the next day. Captain Anderson adjusted the small power circular saw that was a part of his outfit, and the roughing of the slender pieces was soon accomplished. As each had to be delicately planed, sandpapered, and shellaced, this job ran into night again.

That evening, Mrs. Leighton began to wonder if she might not get a letter from her husband the next day in relation to the little estate and its disposition.

“I hope not,” whispered Andy to his friend, the captain. “He’ll likely put a crimp in my airship plans.”

“Put a crimp in *your* airship plans?” repeated Captain Anderson soberly. “What

have you got to do with the airship? Aren't you working for me? It's your father and I who are partners."

"Oh, of course," replied the boy. "Of course—I forgot. But he may not want me to work on it."

"That need n't stop the work," exclaimed the captain. "I think I'll go ahead just the same. I reckon I've got a sort of interest in the engine, and, as for the bird-tail rudder, I can give that up if he wants it. But he won't; he's a mechanic."

The letter did not come the next day, but when it did, in the middle of the following week, it was even enthusiastic about the possibilities of the discovered model, and congratulated Mrs. Leighton on her good luck in being able to make an arrangement with Captain Anderson to work out the idea. It said nothing about Andy's work on the testing apparatus. This was probably because of Mr. Leighton's special interest in his wife's description of her brother's estate. How much this was, was indicated by his suggestion that no part of the property be sold, as he was arranging, if possible, to come to Florida in about two weeks.

When Mrs. Leighton read this, Andy did not

“hurrah.” Instead, he made a quick calculation. Then he smiled. In two weeks the aeroplane would be completed, and *someone* would have tested it.

There were over eighty ribs to be attached to the two frames of the aeroplane. At intervals of about a foot, the front end of each strip was screwed to the top of the forward beam. Extending the strip back over the rear beam, it was made fast there with screws. Two feet of the free end of each strip extended beyond the rear beam. These having been put in place, there was a hasty smoothing of all timbers with sandpaper and another coat of shellac and when Saturday night came, the big skeleton-like, fragile-looking frame, which almost filled the big boatshed, was locked up with the feeling that the hardest work had been accomplished.

By Tuesday night, both planes had been covered. The muslin, cut in full six-foot pieces, had been soaked in Andy's waterproof solution (equal parts of alum and sugar of lead) and dried. Then one end of a piece was glued to the front edge of the beam and fastened with copper tacks. Carefully the strip was drawn back, and, as it was stretched skin tight, made

fast with small tacks to the ribs. The rear end was turned under and glued to prevent raveling.

"This is worse than ribbin' her," panted Andy more than once as he pulled at the muslin. "And I reckon the bottom ain't agoin' to be any easier."

Nor was it. But when the work was done, the result of a week's labor began to look like an aeroplane. The muslin was now treated to a good coat of varnish, which turned the white stretches to a golden brown color.

The next step was the bracing of the frame with wires. Suitable metal plates, with hooks, to be attached to the stanchions to afford points for holding the wires, were not available. Therefore, these were made out of sheet steel by Andy and Captain Anderson in the shop over on Goat Creek. Screw holes were bored by the hand drill found there, and an edge of each sheet was turned into a hook by heating the metal in the forge and blue-tempering the plate afterwards.

Progress seemed to be slower now, but the interest in the work increased in proportion. When all the open spaces between the stanchions had been crossed with diagonal wires tied

to the steel plates at the top and bottom of each upright and the turn-buckles had been inserted in the middle of each length of wire, the proud artificers were ready to key the unstable frame into rigidity.

This was a most delicate task. Truing the long frame on the floor and squaring its vertical parts with a level, the task was to tighten the wires without warping the sections.

“It ’s like tunin’ a piano,” laughed Andy.

“Or tightenin’ a sawbuck,” suggested the captain.

Then Andy discovered that the tightened, straining wires were acutely vibrant, and he began to test his work by twanging the wires with his fingers, like the strings of a harp.

“Here, you,” exclaimed the busy boat builder, “you can’t work and play, too—”

“You can’t?” laughed Andy. “What are you doin’?”

“I guess you ’re right,” snickered Captain Anderson. “The whole thing is play to me.”

A part of nearly every evening of the ten days already consumed in making the aeroplane frame had been devoted to theories and sketches and plans for attaching the bird-tail rudder, the engine and propeller shafts, the wires to flex

the free extensions of the upper plane and, most important of all, a universal lever to flex the planes and operate the tail rudder simultaneously.

Pieces and braces were now attached to the frame to hold the engine and propellers similar to those on the Wright machine. The seat for the operator also followed the Wright plan. The universal operating lever was an ingenious adaptation of the Wright control.

"It looks good to me," approved Andy, when the resourceful captain suggested the contrivance.

"It 's about as flimsy as everything else," grunted Captain Anderson. "I 'd hate to trust my safety to this, or any other part of the spidery thing—"

"Hush!" interrupted the boy, with a warning finger. "Not a word o' that kind where mother can hear it. Now, when I get up in that thing—"

"You?" broke in the captain, looking very sober, as he did when much amused. "Who said you were going up in it?"

"Pshaw!" retorted the boy, "you know *you* ain't. And Ba ain't—"

"Don't fly your aeroplane till it 's built," teased the captain.

The lever to operate the planes and bird-tail rudder was at the right of the operator's seat. It was to be attached to the forward beam by means of a rocking-hinge—also devised by Captain Anderson, and later made by Andy—that permitted a straight motion forward and back and a movement to right and left at right angles to the other motion.

About six inches above the beam, a wire was made fast to the lever. This wire extended to the right and left, and passed beneath grooved wheels attached to the base of the first and second stanchions to the right and left. From the second wheel on each side the wire passed up and diagonally to the rear and far corner of the upper plane, where it was made fast. Throwing the lever to the right drew down the rear of the extended upper plane on the left, while the contrary motion reversed the operation.

A frame of spruce and pine, extending ten feet in the rear, passing between the orbits of the propellers and braced with wires extending to the ends of the car beams, was planned to carry the proposed tail-guide. The shaft to operate this was a reinforced length of spruce.

This rudder shaft extended to the universal control lever. From this end of the shaft, a

quarter-inch round steel pin extended through the lever and was secured by a nut so that the shaft might revolve and yet be pushed backward and forward by a front and rear movement of the control rudder.

The mechanism to revolve the shaft to the right or left at the same time was what taxed Captain Anderson. In an attempt to secure this result, he added a small hand lever to the top of the principal control lever. This adjunct was so hinged that it might be moved only to the right and left, and had no play forward or backward. At the base of this little lateral lever a cross-arm was attached, about six inches long. The movement of the little lever gave this cross-arm a rocking motion up and down.

From each end of the rocking lever a hinged arm extended downward and engaged—through guides—a cogged wheel, also fastened on the control shaft.

“I’ll bet that’s exactly the way my uncle meant it to work,” commented Andy enthusiastically. “If you throw the control lever to the right, the left rear plane is depressed. The same motion turns the wheel on the lever shaft. This, working in the cog on the rudder shaft, gives it a reverse motion—and that throws the fins of the tail on a diagonal slant to the right.”

“I ’m followin’ out your idea,” assented the captain. “But I don’t know what it means.”

Andy laughed and explained it all again.

“Turning to the right with the usual rudder, tends to make the machine dart in that direction, just as a boat does when you turn quickly. To stop that, a part of the aeroplane surface on that side is drawn down—that increases the atmospheric pressure and tends to right the machine; the flexing wires see to that. But my uncle’s bird-tail guide goes further: it attempts to lessen this tendency to dart by flexing the rudder on the side that is n’t doing the turning. By elevating the idle corner, he decreases the wind pressure, and that part of the machine settles. See?”

“I don’t,” admitted the captain. “But there ’s the machinery to do what you want.”

CHAPTER X

DESPERATE NEEDS AND A BOLD APPEAL

Before the end of the coming week the aeroplane would be finished. As this time approached, Andy began to be greatly bothered. At first, he had worried alone over the airship and the possibility of being able to construct it. Now, he was satisfied that a practicable aircraft would result.

“And what then?” Andy was debating this on Sunday morning as he stood before the idle boathouse. “What ’s the good of it all? It ’s a cinch that my mother ain’t goin’ to let me try to run it. And what if she does consent? For a fellow who has n’t had a particle of experience, to bang away with a car like that ’d be a crime. Everyone has to learn. I can, I know, but a fellow certainly don’t do it the first time. It ’s twenty chances to one that I ’d break the thing the first dash out of the box. Gee whiz! but it does seem a shame.”

“What ’s a shame?” asked Captain Anderson, who was strolling to a seat on the pier.

Andy explained, walking by his friend's side.

"Seems to me you 've begun that line o' reasoning pretty late," commented the captain, as he filled his morning pipe. "To tell the truth, I have n't bothered about it because I've thought all along that your mother would first object and then relent. And I supposed anyone could operate an aeroplane who had the nerve—"

"That 's it," acknowledged Andy, "they can't. I 'm not afraid, but a fellow ought to begin with a gliding machine and learn how to handle it—get used to dips, angles, and darts, and what 's necessary to correct 'em. If he don't do that, he should, at least, go up several times with someone who can tell him all about it."

The captain drew on his pipe slowly.

"Then what have we been breakin' our backs over?" he asked soberly. "All along we 've been makin' something we have n't any use for."

"I don't agree with you there," answered Andy positively. "It is of some use—we found we could make it."

"Humph!" exclaimed the captain. "I could have told you that; I would n't have begun her if I had n't known that."

“You ’re not sorry, are you?” asked the lad, a little plaintively.

“Sorry!” laughed Captain Anderson. “Not a bit, except for you. All I was doin’ was for fun and because you were so eager.”

“I know,” answered Andy quickly, “and you bet I ’m grateful enough. I ’m only gettin’ cold feet now because you ’ve made such a dandy. If it was only my own work, a sort o’ patched up thing with a common engine, I ’d bang away and take a chance in it, if I could. But I don’t believe there has ever been a better flyin’ machine made, and if I smashed her, I ’d never forgive myself. But it ain’t because I ’m afraid.”

“Then,” answered the old boat builder sympathetically, “we ’ll finish the job if we never use the machine. It ’ll be a nice piece of work—”

“And maybe something ’ll happen,” interrupted the boy.

“There ’s always a chance,” answered the man, with a big smile. “But I can’t see what can happen that ’ll ever make it of use. Not unless the clouds part some day and drop a trained aviator at our feet—someone lookin’ for a job.”

“That ’s it,” exclaimed the boy impulsively. “Not out of the clouds, of course. But, perhaps, maybe, someway, somehow such a man might happen along.”

The captain smiled and began to unfold his paper.

“Or,” went on Andy, “if he did n’t happen along, we might *send* for one—”

“Send for one!” exclaimed the man. “You mean hire an aviator to come down here into the wilderness?”

“I guess I did n’t mean that,” said Andy in confusion. “I don’t know what I meant.”

His companion saw tears of chagrin and disappointment almost showing.

“Don’t you bother, Andy. We ’ll finish the airship in the best manner we can. I hardly think we can employ a professional aviator, but something may happen—something usually happens when you ’re young enough and eager enough.”

“If mother lets me, I ’ll do it anyway,” broke out the boy.

“And smash our beautiful machine?” laughed the captain.

Andy winced.

“Come,” went on the captain. “I always

worry to-morrow. Run into the house, get something to read, and forget aeroplanes to-day. I think it's gotten on your nerves a little."

But the day was too fine for reading, and, as a good sailing breeze came up, Captain Anderson soon followed Andy, with a proposal that all, including Ba, should sail to Melbourne.

The plunge of the swift *Valkaria* through the water and the savor of the semi-salt spray were enough to revive all the lad's old enthusiasm. He took the tiller at times, helped with the sheets, and, long before Melbourne was reached, the joy of sailing had pushed the aeroplane temporarily into the background.

While waiting in the parlor of the little hotel, his elders busy with new acquaintances, Andy stumbled upon something that set him thinking. In a few minutes, with almost a gasp—as if some idea was too much for him—he left the house and curled up on a seat on the gallery. His forehead was wrinkled. He had come to a sudden and bold decision, and he was trying to persuade himself that it was not ridiculous.

"Anything new botherin' you, Andy?" asked Captain Anderson, as he appeared to tell the boy that dinner was ready.

“Nothin’ that ’s botherin’ me,” answered Andy, in a rather confident tone, “but I ’ve got an idea. I reckon it ’s so foolish that I ain’t agoin’ to tell about it—yet.”

As the boy followed the man into the house, he folded up a newspaper he had found on the parlor table and put it into his pocket. After dinner Andy secured from the landlady some paper, an envelope, and a stamp. In the office, he wrote a letter which, however, he did not seal.

That done, he composed himself until there was talk of starting home. There was no post-office at Valkaria, and as Andy had an important letter that he wanted to mail at the earliest opportunity, he managed to get Captain Anderson aside.

A little nervously he drew out the paper he had in his pocket. It was an Indian River region paper—the *Daytona Daily Beacon*. The boy pointed to the main article on the front page—an account of the annual automobile speed contests to be held during the coming week. Although these races, which take place on Ormond’s famed ocean beach—hard and smooth as cement—are known all over the world, Captain Anderson had no great interest in them.

“You ’d like to go?” he began, glancing at the article indifferently.

Instead of replying, the boy, his nervousness most apparent, ran his finger down the column, through the program, to the end, where it paused on a sub-head entitled: “Distinguished Visitors Present.” The captain’s eyes followed Andy’s shaking finger. Then he saw it pointing to two names. These were:

“J. W. Atkinson, President American Aeroplane Works, Newark, New Jersey. Mr. Roy Osborne, ditto.”

“Friends of yours?” asked the captain, still mystified.

“Never saw either,” exclaimed the boy. “But I want you to read this.”

He drew out his newly-written letter, and, fumbling it in his excitement, finally got the sheet in Captain Anderson’s hands. It read:

“VALKARIA, FLORIDA, Jan.—

“MR. ROY OSBORNE,

“*Care J. W. Atkinson, Pres. Am. Aeroplane Works, Daytona, Florida.*

“*Dear Sir:—You will be surprised to get this letter. But maybe you won’t be sorry. Like a good many other boys, I have read about your*

experiences with aeroplanes. I live in St. Paul, and the newspapers there published all about what you did in Utah. The papers said you are only 17 years old, and that is why I am writing this, as I am 16. As I said, I don't live here, but I've been down here nearly two weeks, and I'm living with Captain Anderson, at this place. We have made an aeroplane that I am sure will fly. It has a new kind of rudder that I've never heard of before. Maybe it is a good thing. I am taking the liberty of writing this letter to you because the papers say you are a skilled aviator. And I thought maybe you would like to investigate the new rudder that we have made. I haven't any money to pay you to do it, but I thought that you might like to do it anyway because you are a boy. It is only 85 miles to Valkaria from Daytona. I suppose you work for Mr. Atkinson, but if he will let you come, there is splendid boating down here, and we have some fine ripe pineapples and oranges, and I would be glad to show you our new airship. Trusting that I may be favored with an early reply, I am,

"Your obedient servant,

"ANDREW LEIGHTON.

"P.S.:—The engine was made by my uncle, and it is a beauty."

When Captain Anderson finished reading the letter, his face was a puzzle. He frowned, he ran his hands through his heavy silvery hair, and he laughed.

“Andy,” he said, as he reached this stage, “you are certainly bound to get on in the world. Now, who ’d have thought of that? Of course, he won’t come—”

“Why won’t he?” snapped the boy. “I would, if I were in his place and got a letter like that—”

“But he ’s evidently at Daytona with his boss—”

“That ’s it. They aren’t there for fun. They ’re watching motors; they ’re lookin’ for ideas.”

“But what do you know about him?”

Then Andy told the story of Roy Osborne, which is so well known in aviation circles, and which was familiar to him through the book written about the young aviator’s hazardous and interesting experiences in the west under the title of “The Aeroplane Express.”

“And you ’re goin’ to send it?” commented the captain.

“Right away!”

“Well,” exclaimed the man, laughing, “it is

certainly a nervy thing to do. But, good luck to you."

There was no poling the *Valkaria* that evening, and the sail home was full of joy to all. The next morning, work on the aeroplane was resumed with new vigor. The braced car now occupied so much of the shop that, each morning, Captain Anderson and Andy carried it out to the sandy river shore, where it rested all day on "horses," that the two workmen might have the entire shop for their further work.

It had been vaguely planned that the starting and landing wheels would be wooden and hand-made. But from the moment Captain Anderson read the letter to Roy Osborne and confronted the possibility of exhibiting his work to a professional, he became additionally ambitious. Early Monday morning, he telephoned to Titusville for three old bicycle wheels with mending kits and a pump.

"Everything is right but the wheels," he explained. "And if she don't work, we can't afford to have it because we fell down on them."

That day and the next, Andy worked on the wheel mechanism and the brake, while Captain Anderson was at last wholly occupied with the bird-tail guide. The most delicate work was

required for the "heart" of the contrivance, as he called it, which was the thin tail pinions of wood, each of which had to be worked out like the blade of a propeller.

The week went by with no word from Roy Osborne. At first Captain Anderson was inclined to twit Andy about his letter. But when he saw how seriously the boy viewed his own presumption, the sympathetic boat builder ceased his joking.

"He might have answered my letter, at least," Andy would say.

Each day Ba sailed to Melbourne for the mail, and each time he came back with no communication from Daytona.

"By Saturday she'll be ready for the engine, I think," said Captain Anderson in mid-week.

"I reckon so," replied Andy, rather ruefully. "But there's no use o' puttin' the engine in her as long as we've got to tote her in and out of the shop every day."

"No," exclaimed the captain, "we'll go the limit. When we get that shaft rigging in and the chain drives and the propellers on, I want to see the engine hooked up to 'em. I want to see those wheels move, if we've got to tie

her to the dock to keep her from flyin' away. And we 'll fit on the rudder and the front balance, too, just to see what the whole thing looks like."

"I 'm goin' to make her let me do it," broke in Andy impulsively. "Mother won't have the heart to refuse me when she sees it all out there ready to fly."

The captain took a long puff at his pipe and laughed.

"Anyway," he said slowly, "she looks like the real thing to me. If your mother 'll let you, go the limit. If she won't fly, bust her. I don't care."

CHAPTER XI

ROY OSBORNE REACHES VALKARIA

Andy had fallen into the habit of strolling up the sandy road each evening about the time for the Lake Worth Express to go south. But not once did he catch the sound of the warning whistle or the grinding brakes. Even the Friday night train went by without slackening speed, and the boy was almost ready to abandon hope that Roy Osborne might come to his rescue.

“The automobile races were ended this afternoon,” said Andy when he returned to the house after a vain visit to the box-car depot Friday evening. “If he don’t come to-morrow evening, I ’ll give up.”

Although neither Andy nor Captain Anderson talked much about the new aeroplane this evening, the machine being practically complete, they could not resist making it the subject of some comment.

“It don’t look very strong to me,” remarked

Mrs. Anderson. "Where do you hitch on the wings?"

In explaining that the wings were the two planes, Andy grew verbose and was soon expatiating, for the first time, on the magnificent possibilities of the apparatus.

"Then you let it up with a rope," suggested Mrs. Anderson, upon whom, to tell the truth, a good part of Andy's technical talk was wasted.

Both Andy and Captain Anderson laughed.

"I wish we could," exclaimed the captain, "but I'm afraid we'll have to sail it without a rope. It works just like a boat—but in the air," he explained.

"But who guides it?" persisted his wife.

"Who? Why, there must be an operator. I supposed you knew that—"

"I knew that much about it," interrupted Mrs. Leighton, with a half patronizing smile. "I've just been waiting for Andrew to offer to do it."

There was an awkward silence. The captain puckered his lips, and Andy grew white about the mouth. Someone had to say something.

"And what if I did?" said the boy, at last, his fingers gripped and his breath partly suppressed.

“Have you been counting on doing this?” asked his mother, sitting upright and leaning toward the distressed boy.

“N—no,” stammered Andy. “But there is no one else.”

Mrs. Leighton turned toward Captain Anderson:

“Do you want him to do this, Captain?” she asked, her voice indicating that this situation had been long anticipated.

“No,” exclaimed the captain. “I don’t want him to do it. Of course, it is more than dangerous.”

“You know you said you ’d find someone,” continued Mrs. Leighton, who was visibly under a strain.

“I have n’t found anyone yet,” replied the captain, somewhat crestfallen.

Mrs. Leighton was silent a few moments.

“Captain,” she said at last, “whenever, in your judgment, Andrew can be of further use to you in this experiment, he may do as you wish. If you think he ought to attempt to operate this aeroplane, I feel that I must defer to your judgment—”

The captain was on his feet in an instant, shaking his head.

“We should have thought of all this before we began and saved all our trouble and expense,” he exclaimed. “It ’s too late to mend that, but it is n’t too late to prevent the boy breaking his neck. I don’t recommend that he turn aviator—I don’t even believe I ’ll consent to it.”

Any hope that Andy had that his mother might approve of his undertaking to operate the car, was dead. The boy arose and left the room. He choked back a sob and wiped away a few tears that he could not suppress, and then walked far out on the pier and sat in the moonlight alone and sadder than he had ever been in his life.

When he finally entered the boathouse to go to bed, he found Captain Anderson already asleep. The boy wondered if his friend and co-worker did not feel something of the same disappointment. In the morning Andy was awakened by a noise in the shop, and he turned over to find Captain Anderson opening the big double doors.

“Turn out, youngster, and give me a hand. I want to get the car out so I can fasten on the rudder.”

“I suppose you ’re goin’ to take a photograph

of it," said Andy, with a sad smile, "and then knock her to pieces. It would make a fine rack to dry clothes on—"

"I 'm goin' to test her out if it 's the last thing I do alive," said the captain in a determined voice.

"You?" exclaimed Andy, rolling out of bed. "You? Not if I can stop you, you won't. You 're sure to kill yourself."

"What about you?" replied his companion.

"Oh, I—well, that 's different. I always wanted to. And you 're doin' it just because—because you 're mad."

"Never mind why I 'm doing it," went on the captain. "You get dressed and get busy."

Without daring to make further protests, the boy complied. At the earliest moment, however, he went into the house and almost immediately Mrs. Anderson appeared with a skillet in her hand. Rushing down the path to the boathouse, she cried:

"Charles Anderson, you 'll do no such thing."

Her husband, already bolting on the bird-tail rudder frame, looked up in surprise.

"Do you mean to tell me you think you 're goin' sailin' off in the sky in that thing?"

"I have n't told you anything of the sort," answered the captain somewhat meekly.

"Well, are you?"

"I—I—"

"You are not! That 's all there is to that. It 's bad enough to come down here and live half the year doing nothing and seeing nothing while you fritter away your time building boats you don't want, and nobody wants, I guess. But you mark what I say, I ain't goin' to go mopin' around in black the rest o' my life pretending you weren't crazy when you committed suicide. And if you don't tell me this minute you 'll stay down on the ground, I 'll smash every stick in this fool killer."

"I—I—" began the captain again.

As he hesitated, his irate wife sprang forward with her skillet in the air. The fragile varnished spruce stanchions were at her mercy.

"I promise," capitulated her husband. "I won't try it."

"Then you come right in to breakfast," exclaimed Mrs. Anderson. "And if you want my advice, you 'll put a match to that whole contraption and try to get back to your senses again. You, too, Andrew," she said hotly as she passed the alarmed lad. "You 're both clean crazy."

Despite this domestic conflict, Captain Anderson and Andy could not resist a surreptitious glance now and again and a covert smile. But Mrs. Anderson was in earnest, and the old-time silence about the new aeroplane was resumed at the breakfast table.

"Othello's occupation's gone," said Captain Anderson in a low voice as he and the boy left the house.

"He *may* come to-night," almost whispered Andy, referring to Roy Osborne. "Hadn't we better go ahead?"

Captain Anderson nodded his head toward the kitchen, where Mrs. Anderson could be heard making far more than ordinary kitchen clatter.

"Nothing to-day," he said, with a smile. "Mrs. Anderson is the easiest-going woman in the world. But, when she breaks out as she did to-day, I don't want to cross her. We'll put the car back into the shop, and—well, we might try a sail until the storm is over."

"There's someone out already," remarked the almost disconsolate boy, pointing toward a speck of sail far down the river.

Captain Anderson looked and led the way to the boathouse. Unbolting the part of the

rudder frame he had already attached, he and Andy carried the light frame into the shop.

“Something like a pallbearer,” remarked the captain. “Maybe our sail will cheer us up.”

Before he left the shop, he took down his binoculars, and had a squint up and down the river.

“Looks like Lars Nilsen’s *Frieda* from St. Sebastian,” commented the captain, indicating the boat in sight.

Ten minutes later the man and the boy had rowed out to the anchored *Valkaria*, and were hoisting the sail, when Captain Anderson noticed that the boat in the river had come about and was making for his pier.

“It is Nilsen,” said the captain, “and he’s comin’ in. Hang on to the mooring till we see what he wants.”

As the *Frieda* approached the pier, it could be seen that, besides the man sailing the boat, a young man was aboard. By his side, in the stern, lay a traveling bag. The passenger had a smooth but somewhat tanned face, and he wore a stiff-brimmed light-colored soft hat such as are common in the far west.

Captain Anderson sang out a greeting to the

skipper of the little craft and, the moment its nose touched the pier, the young man, bag in hand, sprang on the dock.

Andy's heart thumped with a sudden thought. He dropped the mooring line, and the *Valkaria* drifted dockward.

"Is this Captain Anderson?" called the young man.

As the captain replied, the stranger continued:

"Then this is Andy Leighton!"

"It is," shouted Andy, "and you're Roy Osborne!"

"One guess did it," exclaimed the youth. "I'm a little late, but we had a great sail. I got your letter—came down last night, but got carried to St. Sebastian and stayed all night with Mr. Nilsen—came up in the *Frieda*—dandy boat—how's the airship?"

"I hardly thought you'd come," began Andy, embarrassed.

"It was sort of accidental," replied the new arrival, as he shook hands all around. "I was to go back to Newark yesterday, but when I showed Mr. Atkinson your letter, he said I might come. I'm to join him at Lake Worth to-morrow."

“To-morrow?” exclaimed Andy. “Do you have to go so soon?”

“Mr. Atkinson thought it wouldn’t take long. I didn’t just understand. How did you ever happen to get an aeroplane down here?”

As the party started up the pier, Andy began his explanation. Without going to the house, the group went at once to the boat shed. Within five minutes, Roy Osborne, his coat off and his sleeves rolled up, was again the expert aviator. Swiftly he went over the newly wrought car, examined every detail of the bird-tail rudder and then asked Andy to operate it. Then he did the same thing himself.

“What do you think of it?” asked Andy with barely concealed anxiety.

“An adaptation of Renaud’s idea,” answered the young professional.

“Renaud?” repeated Andy. “I don’t believe my uncle ever heard of him or his idea.”

“Quite likely,” answered Osborne, “but it is a most ingenious application of the Frenchman’s theory. It has never before been applied,” he went on.

“Will it work?” exclaimed Andy.

“Mechanically, it looks good to me. But there is only one way to find whether it is a practical improvement—try it!”

“Will you?” urged Andy.

“Let me see the engine,” was the youthful aviator’s answer.

Here was something Andy understood. Almost before Roy Osborne reached the delicate motor, Andy had primed it, set his ignition, and, much to his relief, had the cylinders softly singing with the unbroken purr of the perfect engine.

The sight of the aeroplane had not moved the new arrival. But at the sound of the engine, he sprang forward, and then stood amazed. The next instant, his hands, big and sinewy for his age, were on the cylinders as if caressing them. His eyes glistened. Then his strong hands caught one end of the throbbing mechanism and raised it partly from the floor.

“Have you got the patterns for that?” he exclaimed quickly.

“There are none,” answered Andy. “My uncle made it—he’s dead.”

Osborne stopped and started the engine.

“I’ll give \$10,000 for it and the right to make it,” he added, after another moment.

Andy gasped; even Captain Anderson’s mouth dropped open.

“How—how about the new rudder,” Andy managed to say, at last.

“I don’t know about that, yet. But I do know about this. Will you sell it?”

Andy was confused; he hesitated, with no definite thought.

“Show Andy how to operate our aeroplane, if it ’ll go,” put in Captain Anderson, “and I reckon we can trade.”

Osborne turned to the excited, trembling Andy.

“Is it a go?” he asked with a smile.

“If you can make our aeroplane fly,” answered Andy, his face almost white with joyous emotion, “and ’ll teach me how to do it, you can have anything I ’ve got.’

CHAPTER XII

THE PELICAN MAKES ITS FIRST FLIGHT

Based on his hasty examination of the aeroplane, young Osborne instantly suggested a few improvements or reinforcements. As most of the work yet to be done, such as the attachment of the rudder, landing skis, and wheels, would increase the car so much in size that it could not be taken in and out of the shop, everything was immediately moved out of doors.

Then, before actual labor began, Captain Anderson suggested that they go into the house for a few moments. Andy chuckled. He knew that the captain wanted to acquaint his suspicious wife with the turn in affairs—possibly the captain was afraid that Mrs. Osborne might make a real attack with her skillet.

Andy could not but envy the young aviator's natty figure and the professional look about him. It was with considerable pride that he presented Osborne to Mrs. Anderson and his mother.

“Maybe you don't know about him,” began

Andy while Roy protested and grew red in the face, "but there is n't anyone in America, young or old, who knows any more about flyin' machines than he does. There 's a book about him, and he ain't but—how old are you?" exclaimed the boy.

"Oh, I can't vote yet," laughed Roy. "This is certainly a beautiful place for a home, Mrs. Anderson."

"And that book tells how he figured out an aeroplane express in the deserts of Utah and found a lost tribe of Indians—"

"But I can't see that anything I did was half as remarkable as the making of a complete aeroplane down here," broke in Roy.

"I never saw a regular flying machine," said Mrs. Anderson, "but this one does n't look like one to me. Do you think it is all right?"

"No aeroplane is absolutely all right," answered Roy smiling. "But this one out there is correct so far as I understand aeroplanes. Anyway, I 'm going to test this one out, and I don't expect to kill myself doing it."

"How far can you go in it?" asked Mrs. Leighton.

"If it works all right, I could go easily from here to Lake Worth, or back over the Everglades, or even across to the Bahamas—"

“To the Bahamas?” broke in Andy.

“Certainly,” affirmed Roy. “I understand they aren’t over eighty-five or ninety miles away. But I shan’t do any of these things. I’ll make a thorough test of the apparatus and then show Andy how to operate it.”

“Andy!” exclaimed Mrs. Leighton in alarm.

“I promised to,” explained Roy, surprised. “That is, if he wants to try it.”

But Mrs. Leighton was shaking her head.

“That’s part of my business, you know. I’ve taught a good many persons and have never yet had an accident.”

“I don’t think I want him to learn,” said Mrs. Leighton slowly.

“Mother,” spoke up Andy, with energy, “didn’t you say I could try to operate this car when Captain Anderson asked you to let me do it?”

“I—believe I did,” conceded that lady hesitatingly.

“Well, Captain Anderson,” exclaimed Andy stoutly, “don’t *you* want me to try it?”

“If Mr. Osborne tests it out and takes you up and shows you how, I think it’ll be all right.”

“There,” urged the boy facing his mother, “are you going to keep your word?”

"Let's see what Mr. Osborne has to say about it after he has tried it," pleaded the boy's mother.

That was all the concession Andy wanted.

At three o'clock the *Pelican* was completed.

"You have to wait for the wind to go down, don't you?" asked Captain Anderson. "That'll be about five o'clock."

Roy shook his head.

"Some do," he said, "but with a perfectly-made machine and a powerful engine, I like a fair breeze." He looked about. "I'm all ready."

The river shore at each side of Captain Anderson's place was crossed by a wire fence. On the south side of the pier, the hard, white sand stretched like a road for miles. Here and there was a little driftwood. Captain Anderson removed the fence with a few blows of an axe, while Andy ran down the shore to remove the driftwood.

"I suppose you think it strange I don't help," said Roy to Mrs. Anderson and Mrs. Leighton, who were on the pier. "But that's the first thing an aeroplane operator has to learn. When I make an extensive flight, I do no work that day if I can help it. My assist-

ants fill the tanks and get the car in place. I save every bit of muscle and nerve force I have."

"You haven't stuck to your rule to-day," suggested Mrs. Leighton a little anxiously. "You've worked harder than the others."

"Oh, this isn't a *real* flight," explained Roy. "I mean one in which you're going to do stunts in the way of an exhibition. I shan't go high or far. If I were going up several thousand feet—"

"Several thousand feet!" exclaimed both ladies.

"The safety in aeroplane work," Roy explained, "is in going very high or very low—no middle ground. Either go so low that a fall won't hurt you, or get up so high that if anything happens, your machine will have time to get into a glide."

The fence having been removed and the beach cleared, the taut, bird-like aeroplane was carefully trundled around the pier and out on the sand facing south, from which direction the breeze was blowing. Andy and the captain were visibly nervous.

Then, as if it had just occurred to him, Roy said he would test the engine once more. Mrs.

Anderson and Mrs. Leighton had followed close behind. Roy turned with a smile.

"You ladies had better step to one side," he suggested. "There 'll be quite a commotion behind. Take hold of her," he said to the captain and Andy.

He located Captain Anderson and Andy at the rear of the car on opposite sides of the rudder frame and told them to sit on the ground and dig heel holes in the sand as if pulling on a rope in a tug-of-war.

"And pull your hats over your eyes," he ordered. "Hold your heads down and hang on until you get the word to 'let go'."

The captain, not less eagerly than Andy, did as directed, and Roy, having turned the propeller blades into place, started the engine. The first whirr of the big blades began to agitate the loose sand and dry grass. Then the young aviator turned on more power. The agitation grew into a breeze, and that into a tornado-like storm of wind. The boy and the man on the ground felt the aeroplane pulling, and as it began to tug at its human anchors and rock from side to side, Roy quickly shut off the engine.

"Fine," he remarked without excitement,

as the dust and grass settled and Andy and the captain shook the dirt from their faces. "Nothing the matter with that engine." Then with another look about and a "feel" of the hand for the wind, he walked to the front of the car.

The breeze seemed a little stronger now. As the young aviator noticed this, he ran into the boathouse and appeared with his coat. This he buttoned and then turned up the collar.

"There 's just a chance that I 'll have to go up a little to turn and get back on the beach," he explained, "and you don't have to go very high to find it considerably cooler."

Then he turned the visor of his cap to the rear, and climbed into the seat.

"Hold on till you get the word," he commanded. At the same moment he started the engine again.

Once more the rush of wind behind told the power of the revolving propellers. Roy did not look behind. One hand on the engine valve and the other on the lever control, he sat unmoving. Lower and lower dropped the heads of the captain and Andy, as their heels sank into the sand and their hands gripped the framework—the fragile car was throbbing

with power and the propellers were no longer visible.

“She ’s slippin’—!”

“Let go!” shouted Roy.

As the captain and the boy fell backward, the untested aeroplane darted forward. For a few yards, it bounded up and down, and then, as if gathering new force, shot straight over the smooth sand.

Once it seemed about to rise, and then, striking the beach again, the aviator seemed to lose control of the machine. The rushing aeroplane shot sideways, as if to dash into the shallow river. Again it sprang upward, and again darted toward the river. Just as the forward wheel touched the water, the great planes caught the breeze, poised themselves for an instant, and rose in the air like a fluttering duck. Twice its rear wheels touched the surface of the river, and then the spectators could see Roy shoot the bird-tail rudder shaft to the rear and the pinions fly upwards.

“He ’s off!” shouted Andy.

“You bet he is!” shouted Captain Anderson just as vigorously. “She ’s flyin’!”

On the sand, Andy raced back and forth, as if he had lost his senses. With a loud whoop

of joy, he turned a handspring as the only relief for his bottled-up excitement.

Out over the river the *Pelican* flew a few hundred feet, and then, veering toward the beach, began to rise. Her propellers seemed to sound louder as she lifted herself. And southward, Roy held her, between two hundred and three hundred feet above the beach, for perhaps a half mile.

Then her operator began to mount higher. As he did so, he turned out over the water and brought the machine about toward the north, at least eight hundred feet above the water.

Andy ran to his mother and threw his arm around her.

“Watch it!” he cried. “Is n’t it a wonder?”

But his mother was too astounded to make a reply.

Having tested the machine, Roy could not resist one of his exhibition stunts. His propellers going full speed, he headed the car toward the beach at a point a little south of where the fence had stood.

Coming directly toward his audience, his speed could only be guessed by the rapidly growing outlines of the car.

This was shooting downward like some swift

bird in search of prey. At the angle at which it was traveling, it must surely dash itself on the beach.

“Look out!” yelled Andy, alarmed.

Then something happened. With coolness that had come only with many flights, the boy in the machine made two swift motions. As one hand shut off the engine, the other shot back the rudder lever. The darting machine responded to the guiding planes, rose lightly as if it had struck an atmospheric hill, and then, the propellers coming to an instant stop, the machine floated gracefully forward as if on invisible tracks. Touching its wheels daintily on the ground a few times, it came to a gentle run which ended as Roy gradually applied the wheel brake.

“She wants a little ballast on the right side,” said Roy as he slid from his seat. Then he reached out his hands to the captain and Andy, and said, with a laugh:

“Any time you gentlemen need jobs, I’ll undertake to get them for you in Newark. Your machine is all right. The bird-tail guide certainly helps. I found a little trouble to start because I didn’t give it enough play; I didn’t allow for the counter-action. But it

certainly helps. Did you see the turn? With a plain rudder, I'd have come almost to a standstill doing that. I had a dip, but nothing like the usual one."

"Do you think we can get a patent on it?" asked Andy almost perfunctorily, for he was already feeling the engine cylinders and inspecting the shafts for hot bearings.

"I don't know," said Roy, loosening his coat and reversing his cap. "The idea I've heard of before—maybe it is patented. But I'd try. And, if you can, I hope you'll give us the first chance at it—I mean our company."

"Weren't you scared?" asked Mrs. Leighton.

"Mrs. Leighton," answered Roy, "you can't make an aviator—he's born. That is, you can't educate away fear. I am scared sometimes, but it's from the engine behind my back, never because of the height at which I'm working. But I wish they'd put an engine where you could watch it. A hundred feet up or three thousand, it's all the same to me. The engine is what I'm afraid of. But here's one I'm less afraid of than any I ever saw."

The short winter day was coming to an end,

but the sun was yet above the horizon. The breeze had dropped a little. Andy turned suddenly from his examination of the motor and whispered to Roy. The latter smiled and nodded his head.

"Mother," said Andy, "Mr. Osborne won't be here long. I'm going up with him."

"I—" began Mrs. Leighton. "Are you sure it's safe, Mr. Osborne?"

"We can never be sure of that," answered Roy. "But I'd rather trust myself in an aeroplane than on a motorcycle."

"What if your engine stopped?" suggested the disturbed woman.

"It stopped just now. Or, I stopped it," added Roy. "I can't go up without the engine, but I can come down without it."

"Well—" began Mrs. Leighton.

"Can you hold her alone, Captain Anderson?" shouted Andy joyously, knowing that consent had been given.

"I can hold her until she pulls away," responded the captain soberly, "and when she does that, I guess she'll be pullin' some."

"That'll do," said Roy. "Climb aboard."

Three minutes later, Andy Leighton rose from the ground in his first aeroplane flight—but not the last by any means.

CHAPTER XIII

BA, THE BAHAMAN, TALKS AT LAST

“The first thing I discovered,” said Andy, when his flight was over, “was that it is n’t half as scary as it looks. When I’ve watched aviators and seen the planes dip, it always seemed I’d feel as if it was sure goin’ to turn over. But you don’t.”

“It ’s because you are moving with the machine,” explained Roy. “A grade don’t seem as steep when you are on it.”

“I could n’t get up even a thrill,” declared Andy. “I supposed I’d hang on—I did n’t. Why, Roy even let me look after the engine.”

“When I began flying,” said Roy, “I went up alone. It was a foolish thing to do. After that, when I was really learning, I had to follow Mr. Atkinson’s first rule for new men—if they flew lower than six feet or higher than twenty-five, he made them descend. Follow that rule, and you’ll learn all you can find out by going up higher.”

It was agreed that nothing more should be done that day. The aeroplane was wheeled

over near the boathouse and the engine was covered with a tarpaulin. There would be no risk in leaving it thus exposed, but Captain Anderson said Ba would likely show up, as it was Saturday night. The colored man was to act as watchman.

“And how long are you going to keep that up?” asked the thoughtful Mrs. Anderson. “What use is the thing going to be?”

This was a poser. The captain did not attempt an answer.

“I ’d like a few more lessons, if I can get them,” suggested Andy.

“You can operate it now,” put in Roy, “if you do as I said.”

“Why do you want more lessons?” asked Mrs. Leighton in turn. “Are you thinking of becoming an aviator yourself?”

Roy smiled, and Andy’s jaws set. But the boy made no reply.

When Roy, the aeroplane cared for and the exciting flights having been discussed in all details, suggested that he might as well board the night train and proceed to Lake Worth, there was a protest on the part of all. The young aviator had already endeared himself to his Valkaria hosts. Finally, he was per-

suaded to stay over Sunday, with the promise of a sail on the *Valkaria* the next day.

Nearly all of Sunday was spent on the *Val-karia*. Saturday night and Sunday night, Roy and Andy slept in the boatshed, the captain returning to the house.

By the time the two boys went to sleep Sunday night they had become fast friends. It was arranged that the model of the bird-tail propeller was to be sent to Andy's father in St. Paul that he might consult a patent lawyer concerning it. The boys were not so clear about the engine.

Roy had really no power to buy it outright for Mr. Atkinson before consulting that gentlemen. But he told Andy that he felt sure his employer would be eager to get the motor. Mr. Atkinson, he felt sure, would send his motor superintendent down to look at the engine, and Andy, in turn, assumed the power to give Roy and his friends an option on the engine, subject to examination. Andy was careful to secure Captain Anderson's approval of these negotiations.

"Have it your own way," Captain Anderson said. "I reckon your father and I can settle it between us when I see him."

Four times on Monday did the *Pelican* make successful ascents. On the last one, at two o'clock, Andy made his first flight alone. So far as his anxious observers could see, his operation of the car was in no way different from that of young Osborne. At least, the moment Andy alighted, Roy slapped him on the back and said:

"I guess I'm not needed longer. You can teach someone else now."

And, despite the regrets of his new friends, the young aviator boarded the night train for Lake Worth, each boy agreeing to write to the other, and Roy promising to send his latest pupil an aneroid barometer and an anemometer as soon as he reached Newark.

That night, as on the two previous nights, the strange Ba watched the new aeroplane. The next morning Captain Anderson suggested that the rudder, landing skis, and engine be detached and the frame and parts housed in the shop until the possible arrival of the motor expert from the north.

Andy entered a protest at once.

"I should say not," he said; "that is, unless you insist. I want to make a real flight."

"That's why I want to take it apart," con-

fessed the captain frankly. "I knew you'd want to keep it up."

"You're not afraid of my breaking it, are you?" queried the boy.

"I'm only afraid of your breaking your neck."

"Were you afraid Osborne would break his neck?"

"That's different—he's an expert."

"'Expert'," repeated Andy. "I'll be an expert when I've had the practice. And how will I get it? Not by readin' about airships."

"Settle it with your mother," exclaimed the captain. "I certainly won't object, if she don't."

Although Andy's head was now brimming full of his great, but sleeping, project, he was not yet ready to consult his mother about it. As another step in his great plan, however, he obtained permission to go to his uncle's house, one of the conditions being that he was to bring back some fruit. Although Ba had been watchman for three nights, none knew when he slept. And as soon as Andy got out the *Red Bird's* oars, the negro made ready to accompany him.

Andy's mind was on other things, but he

never neglected an opportunity to talk to the Bahaman. Usually he approached the subject diplomatically. That morning on the way to Goat Creek, he was out of sorts. Therefore, and much to his own surprise, he blurted out:

“Why don’t you tell me about that Timbado place, Ba? What are you afraid of?”

For a moment the colored man gave no sign in face or gesture that he heard. Then, as in the past, his lips began to twitch and his narrow brow grew narrower.

“You ain’t go on dat Timbado?” he repeated, his usual slow-witted question.

“Sure I am,” answered Andy perversely. “Why not? I ’m thinkin’ of goin’ right over there.”

There was no outward change in the black man’s bearing, but the boy could see that some emotion was affecting him within. They had reached Goat Creek, and, as the little boat passed into the currentless channel, Ba ceased rowing.

“Marse Andy,” he began in a husky voice, “Ah done bin on dat Timbado—white men don’ go dar.”

“I ’m thinkin’ of goin’,” exclaimed Andy, hoping to draw out the colored man.

Ba looked at him long and intently.

“Yo’ ain’t know de big white man in Andros—Cap’n Bassett?”

Andy knew that Andros was one of the Bahama “out islands” and that more than one white man lived there, plantation owners.

“An Englishman?” asked the boy.

“Cap’n Bassett done took me on de boat when Ah bruk out de jail in Nassau.”

“And took you to Timbado?” asked Andy eagerly, overjoyed to find at last some inkling of Ba’s story.

The colored man shook his head.

“Two crops Ah wuk on Andros. Den dey sunt me to it.”

“Captain Bassett sent you to Timbado?”

A gulp came in the colored man’s throat and he simply nodded his head.

“What for?”

“Wid Nickolas an’ Thomas—dey ain’t never git away.”

“Ba,” exclaimed Andy sharply, “why did you go to Timbado?”

“Yo’ ain’t nebber hear ’bout Timbado?”

“I never heard of Timbado—”

“Cap’n Bassett tole us to steal it.”

“Steal what?”

“Yo’ ain’t nebber hear ’bout dat big pearl?”

“You mean that Captain Bassett sent you and two other men to steal a big pearl?” asked Andy breathlessly.

“Ah done see it, but Nickolas and Thomas dey don’ see it.”

“Saw a big pearl?”

“Like dat,” said Ba suddenly, leaning forward and holding out his heavy thumb. “An’ like de conch look.”

“A pink pearl as big as your thumb?” questioned Andy, his voice dropping into a whisper.

“Dat ’s fetich,” was the frightened answer. “Ain’t no white man see dat big pearl.”

“And you stole it for Captain Bassett?” went on the boy excitedly.

The frightened Bahaman shook his head again.

“What happened?” persisted his companion. “Tell me!”

“Ah ain’t nebber see dat Nickolas. Ah ain’t nebber see dat Thomas no mo’.”

“And you?” insisted Andy. “Did you get the pearl?”

The oarsman’s hands were trembling. It was evident that in his half-savage way, he

was trying to recall what happened or to think of words to describe it. Again he shook his head, and then suddenly drew the oars into the boat and shipped them. His mouth twitching and his eyelids trembling, he caught his loose shirt with both hands and drew it up to his shoulders. At the same time, he turned on the seat.

His great, muscle-knotted back was seamed with a mass of scars. Long and deep wounds that had turned white in the healing crossed his flesh from his neck to his waist.

Andy shrank back. The persistency with which he had forced the African into this revelation covered him with shame.

“Yo’ ain’t goin’ on dat Timbado Key, is yo’?”

It was Ba’s last appeal.

For answer, Andy could only touch the agitated man sympathetically on his knee and turn away. It seemed to satisfy the colored man, and from that moment, ashamed of his idle curiosity, Andy said no more.

But as he watched the stolid face of the black Hercules, his imagination carried him far from Goat Creek. The ignorant negro became the center of a wild romance. What did it

mean? A fugitive from justice carried away from Nassau by an Englishman; kept in his service for a time and then sent with two others to steal a big pink pearl; two of the men disappear, one of them sees the fetich jewel big as a man's thumb and pink "like a conch," a priceless treasure; then the cruel wounds that must have meant death to any but a man like Ba.

Little wonder that Andy had small thought for anything else that morning. Landing at his uncle's place, he sent Ba to the grove for the fruit, then sat a long time trying to compose himself. Try as he might, to put the weird tale out of his mind, he could not. Finally he entered the house and feverishly sought through the bookshelves until he found an atlas.

After a long search he closed the book with a sigh of relief. He could not find Timbado Key.

"I'm glad of it," he admitted to himself. "It may be only a crazy tale of Ba's, but I've had enough. Back to the aeroplane for me."

The real thing that had brought Andy to his uncle's place that day was to examine a gasoline barrel which stood behind the shop. The

oil used in all their flights so far had been secured in Melbourne, Captain Anderson having ordered it by telephone before consulting the boy.

Andy was overjoyed to find the barrel at least half full. There were no vessels suitable for carrying any of it back, but there were wood-encased tins at Captain Anderson's, and, satisfied with his discovery, the boy made ready to depart. Before he did so, he made a careful and significant examination of the open space on the gentle incline in front of the house, nodded his head approvingly, and, locking the house again, entered the boat.

On the way home the boy was moodily silent, a strange caprice for him. But he had suddenly reached a point where he was disturbed by doubts. He had been in Florida two weeks, but seemed to have lived months in his unexpected and sudden experience, and he was now debating whether it was to end as suddenly in nothing but a boyish fancy or to be the turning point in his young life.

He was positive that never again might such a glorious opportunity present itself to him to make a name for himself. His few days with Roy Osborne had fired him with an ambition

to achieve something out of the ordinary. The question was—should he give his parents the opportunity to crush his ambitions (and he knew he would never disobey their instructions), or should he win their later approval by carrying out his secret plan without their knowledge?

With scarcely a word to Ba, Andy lay in the stern of the boat and thought. But the more he thought, the further away seemed the solution of his problem. Still lost in doubt, the *Red Bird* touched Captain Anderson's pier.

"Cap'n Anderson's gone off in the *de Val-kar*'," said Ba.

It was true. Hastening to the house, Andy found it deserted. The boathouse was closed. On the door of the bungalow was a scrap of paper. It read:

"Your father is at Melbourne. Telephoned us. We've gone for him. Dinner in the pantry. Back this evening.

Anderson."

CHAPTER XIV

ANDY TAKES A DARING CHANCE

Andy read the note, re-read it, walked to the edge of the gallery and looked up and down the wide river. His face was pale. Then he consulted his watch. It was fifteen minutes after twelve o'clock.

"Ah reckon dey all gib yo' de go by," said Ba, with a laugh.

Instead of replying, Andy turned and entered the house. On the kitchen table was his luncheon. Evidently this was not in the boy's mind at that moment. In the living room, he went to the chart-rack and took down the map of the Bahama Islands.

Spreading it out on the table, he weighted the ends, and sat for a few moments, his eyes fixed upon it and his chin in his hands. Then with a pencil and a bit of cardboard for a ruler, he drew lines at right angles through the mouth of Goat Creek and the westernmost end of the Grand Bahama Banks. Following the horizontal lines to the nearest degrees marked on the chart, he had the latitude of

each point. The same operation with the vertical lines gave him the longitude.

These degrees, minutes, and seconds, he wrote down in his memorandum book in this form:

Goat Creek North Lat. $27^{\circ} 57' 30''$ — W. Long. $80^{\circ} 37' 30''$	
Grand Banks North Lat. $26^{\circ} 45'$ — W. Long. $78^{\circ} 54'$	
<hr/>	<hr/>
$1^{\circ} 12' 30''$	$1^{\circ} 43' 30''$

The subtraction showed him the difference between the two points in degrees of latitude and longitude. Andy had no tables to show him the exact number of geographic miles in a degree of latitude or longitude in that part of the world. But, with the knowledge that a degree of either was practically seventy miles at the equator, he computed the number at fifty miles.

The boy was fresh enough in his mathematics to know that the hypotenuse of a rectangle eighty-six miles by sixty-one miles would be approximately—not allowing for the curvature of the earth—one hundred miles. And this he set down as the distance between Captain Anderson's dock and the nearest Bahama land.

There was no time wasted in speculation on

this point. Andy had evidently come to a decision, and he was working directly to a specific end. With the chart yet before him, he went to the mantel, where, close beside the captain's binoculars, always rested a small compass. Squaring the chart sheet with the north and south line of the compass, Andy laid the compass directly over the mouth of Goat Creek. Then he extended his bit of cardboard from the center of the compass to the tip of the Bahama Bank.

The edge of the card cut the compass along the S.E. by S. line. That was a course. With another note of this under his latitude and longitude, the boy sprang up, folded the chart into a square to fit his pocket, dropped the compass into another pocket, and smiled nervously.

"I reckon I'd better eat something," he said.

Returning to the kitchen, he partook of a slice of cold ham, some bread and butter, and a big drink of water. As he started to leave, he again paused with the same nervous smile. This time he took half an apple pie, the remainder of the ham, a few slices of bread, and filled a glass fruit jar with water. Passing

through the house again, he stopped at his trunk and secured a light-weight sweater and a pair of gloves. Then he passed out onto the gallery, and on the bottom of the paper still hanging on the door, he wrote:

“Captain Anderson: Excuse my taking your map and compass and pie and ham. To my mother: I ’m off on a trip in the aeroplane. Don’t worry. I ’ll be back to-morrow or send word soon. Good-bye.

Andy.”

A few minutes later the boy had the tarpaulin off the engine. There was a close examination of the motor, oil cups were newly filled, and a can of lubricator was tied to one of the stanchions. An empty gasoline tank was made fast in the passenger seat, and in a light basket attached to a second stanchion, the busy lad deposited his sweater, water bottle, luncheon, a hatchet, a box of matches, a small hank of seine cord, some screws, wire, and a screw-driver. Then he lashed to the middle-section lower struts a bundle of spruce strips suitable for repairing the frame of the car.

“Yo’ gwine fly away?” asked Ba, when Andy’s preparations finally suggested this to the dull-witted black.

“See this, Ba?” answered the boy, touching the empty gasoline tin. “I ’m goin’ up to my uncle’s place to fill this tank.”

This was true, but only in part. The moment Andy had found his mother and his hosts absent, he had instantly conceived the idea of making a flight to the shop on the hill to secure more gasoline. When his face whitened out on the gallery, this idea had given birth to another one—he would do this, and if all seemed well, he would steel himself to take the great chance of his life. If ever, this was the time to tempt fate with his big idea. It might even mean death, but Andy put that possibility aside. He saw only the opportunity to win fame and reputation; to become a Roy Osborne or a Walter Brookins.

With the help of the colored man, Andy got the aeroplane out on the sand beach and persuaded his assistant to become his human anchor. At his uncle’s house he would have a hill on which to pick up his momentum. The boy looked at his watch—it was three minutes after one o’clock.

There was another delay while the vigilant would-be aviator made further preparations. With a cord, he tied his watch, facing him, on the nearest stanchion, and with four long screws made a little pocket on the lower beam of the car beneath his legs, in which he deposited his compass.

“Good-bye, Ba,” he exclaimed, these details completed, as he held out his hand.

The colored man touched his forehead in salute, and then clumsily gave the boy his powerful hand.

“Yo’ gwine come right back?” he asked.

But the boy did not reply. He was already starting the engine, and Ba fell to his task of holding the car. There was neither a break nor miss in the engine, and as the dust settled over the grim-set negro, Andy crawled into his seat.

“Hold her!” he exclaimed sharply, and once more the engine sprang into action. Faster and faster it flew, but the trembling, tugging car was safe in Ba’s powerful grip.

“All right!” shouted Andy at last, and while Ba fell back, the *Pelican* was clattering over the beach with the quick roll of a sand snipe. Then she took the air. Andy did not

wait for altitude. As soon as he felt that the rushing air had his car on its breast, he began his turn, mounting as he did so.

It was but a moment or so until the aeroplane swept over the pier, having turned and headed north. As it approached the boat landing on which Ba had taken up his anxious watch, the boy dropped the car until it was not over fifty feet above the river.

“Wait here, Ba, I’ll be back in a few minutes.”

The ease with which the car worked elated Andy. That he might not become over confident and to see if everything was all right, he began to mount again at once. He seemed to fall into the trick naturally. Before Goat Creek was reached, he was nearly a thousand feet above the river. Then, taking the turn and dip like a veteran, and without the slightest fear, Andy headed the aerial craft for the house on the hill.

The landing was made a little abruptly, but nothing was broken. Pushing the machine to the top of the hill, the boy turned it, and, throwing off his coat, began the work of refilling his engine gasoline tank and getting the extra can aboard.

Then he entered the house, wrote a note, which he addressed to his mother, locked the place and put the key in the envelope with his note. This time he buttoned up his coat and reversed his cap as Roy Osborne had done, for, from the time he made this ascension, he would have neither time nor opportunity to do anything but direct his car at untried heights, over unknown land and sea to fame and glory. He did not stop to think of anything else.

From the time his engine started and the big propellers began to revolve, he was sorry that he had not brought Ba along to hold the car until it had begun to feel the pressure of the air. With nearly the first motion of the propellers, the aeroplane began to move forward and slowly descend the hill. The new angle seemed to prevent the planes from catching the air, and, as the frame gathered momentum and continued to rumble along over the dry grass, Andy pushed his engine in vain.

The wheels seemed as if running on a track. Like a flash, an idea came to the alarmed operator, and as he shut off the engine, Andy put on the wheel brake. Just at the base of the hill and in front of the hummock swamp, the *Pelican* was brought to a stop.

“Escape number one,” said Andy, “and my own experience number one.”

Then, laboriously and slowly, he managed to get the wide, balanced frame up the slope again and to the top of the hill.

“I ’m in fine shape now,” thought Andy, the perspiration oozing from him and his muscles all a tremble, “but there ain’t any choice.”

He delayed only long enough to get a drink, to wipe his face, and readjust his coat, then once again he mounted his seat. This time his first act was to put on the wheel brake. Then he opened his engine and, to his relief, found the car holding while the propellers got into action.

When at last the powerful propelling screws began to tilt the car forward and the rear bird-tail guide began to lift itself from the ground, the alert aviator released the brake, and once again the fragile frame started down the hill. But this time he could feel it jumping at once, and when he gave it the upward rudder, the hurtling craft immediately responded. Like a soaring bird, it took the air and was off.

It was but a few moments until the Anderson bungalow was in sight, and Andy headed di-

rectly for it. Dropping a little, he got out his envelope containing the message to his mother and placed it between his knees. He did not attempt to call to the colored man, but when he was nearly over the still waiting and apparently transfixed Ba, the boy opened his knees and the envelope fluttered down.

The paper fell in the water, but the colored man rescued it and then stood for a long time gazing at the aeroplane growing smaller in the distance. Hours before Captain Anderson's *Valkaria* reached the pier that evening, the *Pelican* was out of sight. And the last that the vigilant negro saw of it was as it faded into the southeast sky.

Even the stupid Ba knew that the message he had in his shirt would mean a wild commotion among the passengers who alighted from the *Valkaria*. For a time he held aloof, waiting to speak to Captain Anderson alone. It was wholly dark when Mr. and Mrs. Leighton and Captain and Mrs. Anderson reached the house.

A few minutes later the two men rushed from the cottage, while two women followed behind with wild exclamations. Ba thrust his message into Captain Anderson's hands and disappeared in the night. Andy's note read:

*“Bulletin No. 1. Took more gasoline at Leighton’s shop at eight minutes after one. Weather fair, with light southwest wind. Started for Grand Bahama Banks on Pelican at 1:12 P.M. Hope to reach Nassau, New Providence, to-morrow after stop on Grande Banks. Will report by wire on reaching destination. Am well and confident. Love to all.
Andy.”*

If the foolhardy boy could have witnessed the scene that followed in the Anderson home, he would have abandoned his aviation ideas on the spot. In an hour the philosophy and arguments of Mr. Leighton and Captain Anderson began to calm Andy’s mother in a degree, and then those concerned proceeded to make what plans they could to accomplish, if possible, the boy’s rescue, for it seemed to be conceded that even then he must be verging on destruction, if indeed he were not already lost.

At Captain Anderson’s suggestion, Lake Worth was immediately called by telephone, and the Nassau Steamer Company was asked to notify its steamers in transit by wireless of Andy’s flight. He would probably be north of their course, but they were asked to keep a

lookout. They were also asked to repeat the message to Nassau, that spongers and fish boats leaving port might also be on the watch.

“He may change his mind,” argued the captain, “and make a landing far down the peninsula, without putting out to sea. If he does, he will be in a wilderness.”

Mr. and Mrs. Leighton were so agitated that they could not even protest when the captain, a little later, determined to set out in the *Val-karia* at once and proceed down the river. It was one hundred and thirty miles, at least, from the captain's home to Lake Worth. There were little settlements here and there on the mainland side of the river and a wilderness for the entire distance on the peninsula side, where a strip of palmetto scrub and sand separated the sea from the river.

The captain's plan was to sail at once, secure a couple of men at each settlement, carry them across the river, and start them north and south along the ocean in search of a possible wreck of the *Pelican*. At the next town this would be repeated. By the following evening he hoped to cover a good part of the wild country in this manner.

Beyond this, there was nothing that could

be done. In the house of desolation Andy's parents waited sorrowfully for some word. At nine o'clock the captain had sailed, Ba, as usual, showing up in time to join him. Through the night there was no news. Captain Anderson reported about nine o'clock the next morning from far down the river. There was no sign of wreck or trace of the missing boy.

The steamer arrived that day at Lake Worth with a report of nothing seen. Wednesday and Thursday went by with no word. Thursday morning Captain Anderson returned up river by train, Ba bringing the boat later. Thursday evening at six o'clock came a telephone call from Melbourne—a cable message from New York. It read:

“Andros Island, via Nassau, New Providence, by boat. Safe. Record Grande Banks. Here noon to-day. O.K. Leave few days steamer. Andy.”

The enigmatic message was hard to read, but the last word was enough.

“Anyway,” sobbed Mrs. Leighton, “he’s coming back by boat.”

But the next boat and the next arrived at Lake Worth from Nassau without Andy, and then in desperation his parents took farewell of Captain and Mrs. Anderson and journeyed to that resort to await their son.

CHAPTER XV

TIMBADO KEY AND CAPTAIN MONCKTON BASSETT

From the moment Andy dropped his message to Ba, he had no time for thought of those he had left behind. For three or four miles he shot straight down the river at a height of about four hundred feet. In that time his first nervousness lessened. He made ready to begin his flight over the water.

The compass course he had laid was almost S.E. by S. His first alarming discovery was that his compass would be of almost no use. The vibration of the frame and the constant alteration of his level in ascending and descending so agitated the needle that it was always in motion.

“That ain’t goin’ to stop me,” he said at once. “There ’s land everywhere over there to the southeast. I’ll hit something somewhere sometime.”

Laying a general course by the sun, he veered to the southeast. The moment he passed out over the ocean, the air changed. The movement of it was less regular, and Andy knew it

was due to the counter-current of cooler water sent southward by the northward-flowing gulf stream. Steadying the car, he began to ascend. At a thousand feet, the lower eddies disappeared, and he felt the steady southwest breeze reasserting itself.

Taking advantage of this, as a ship tacks, he steadied the car again. Up to that moment every second had been one of activity; both hands had been busy, and every sense was alert. As the aeroplane now fell into a long, almost motionless glide—with nothing to mark its progress but the whistling wind—for the water beneath gave him no measure of flight—the boy discovered that his muscles were already partly numb from the strain.

As best he could, he relaxed his tension—exercised his feet, legs, fingers, and arms. But the attempt to relax his arms brought his second big discovery—when soaring on an even keel at high speed, the slightest movement of the rudder may instantly cost many minutes of hard climbing upward.

Attempting to steady the control lever with his left hand, there was a slight pull to the left and back. As the responsive ship answered her double helm and veered to the left and

down, Andy thrust the lever back, changed hands, and his benumbed fingers for a moment refused to act.

Shaking itself, under the conflicting movements, the *Pelican* wavered and then leaped to the right and down. Aghast, the nervous boy saw the sea—the shore already out of sight—apparently rising to meet and grasp him. Paralyzed for a moment, Andy gave instant proof that he was a born aviator.

Withdrawing his eyes from the sea and bringing all his will power to stamp out his sudden panic, he did two things with hardly the operation of thinking. Setting his teeth and forcing his eyes on the stanchion at his side to get his line, with both hands—and as carefully as if he had minutes for the work—he brought the control lever to a vertical position, and at right angles with the beam to which it was attached.

His intuition told him he could do no more. And it was enough. With a long, gliding, downward sweep the car sped on and at last began to move forward on an even keel. His eyes yet fixed on the lever only, he gradually drew it vertically toward him, and, when the check in the forward speed told him he was

ascending again, looked below. He was not over three hundred feet from the almost waveless sea, and he had dashed downward seven hundred feet.

“I understand now what they mean when they kick about long flights,” said the boy to himself. “It ain’t the nerves—it’s the muscles. You’ve just kind o’ got to hold this thing on its course—anyway she ain’t goin’ to run herself.”

When he figured himself to be about a thousand feet in the air, once more Andy looked at his watch. It was 1:30 o’clock. He had been gone twenty-two minutes. He almost groaned. Osborne had estimated the maximum speed of the *Pelican* at forty-two miles an hour. He was surely going at his best; he was already tired, and since he had not covered quite fifteen miles, he had the hardest part of his voyage before him.

Since there was no relief, he must stand it, and he did. He now kept the aeroplane at the thousand-foot level, as nearly as he could estimate it. The engine never wavered, and finally he was able to ignore it. The boy’s eyes grew hot and began to pain him, and he was no longer conscious of power to move his right

hand, when—and the slowly-creeping minutes seemed endless—at 2:51 o'clock he caught sight of a thin white line on the horizon.

The boy knew at once that this must be land. Whether or not it was the land he had started for—the Grande Banks—made no difference. Confidence returned with the knowledge that he had a goal to aim for, and in that assurance he took his first moments to reason. He had done a foolhardy thing, and now he meant to bring his perilous flight to an end as soon as possible.

What the place might be he neither knew nor cared; his wind-swept eyes burning and his spent muscles rigid, he was conscious only of the line of white. As it rose and widened, he hardly knew how or when he altered the course of the plane. But at last, with an effort that he was fearful he could not make—when the white rolled out beneath him—he shut off the engine. At 3:35 P.M., the rubber landing wheels were bounding over the glaring white of a shell-strewn beach.

The exhausted boy still sat in his seat, motionless, his head on his breast and his fingers yet grasping the idle lever. He had carried out his great idea, reached the Bahamas in an aeroplane, but with nothing to spare.

Until Andy was able to get the numbness out of his limbs, he gave no thought to his surroundings. At last, creeping stiffly from the machine, he found that he had achieved his ambition: the smooth, wide beach, chalk-white from minute shells, the softly surging sea shaded into all colors of blue by shallow bars and outlying keys, the distant ridge of green through which, here and there, palms rose and spread their umbrella-like foliage, all told him that he was at last in the tropics. But where?

When he could, he made his way to the water's edge. A star-fish lay at his feet. He grasped it as another boy might have caught up a nugget of gold. Then another object rolled in on the swell. At the first sight of it, the boy smiled. Then the smile disappeared, and he sprang forward and secured the floating object. It was an opened tin that had contained English orange marmalade.

"From some passing steamer," thought Andy. Then he saw that the label on the can was not yet loosened by the water. "It has n't been floatin' long, though," he added. "Looks as if some Englishman is n't far away."

Ahead of him the beach curved into what seemed to be a bay. The *Pelican* was high

above the water, and there was no living thing in sight that might molest it. Glad of an opportunity to get some exercise, Andy began trotting along the beach. Far to the south, beyond a belt of reefs and smaller keys, he could just make out other lines of white,—other islands, no doubt, but nowhere was there a sail in sight.

“But I guess there’s someone nearby, and an Englishman at that,” speculated Andy. “Since he isn’t in sight, he must be in the cove behind the point.”

When the boy reached the turn in the shore, he was astounded to see just the opposite of the solitude in which he had alighted. At the bottom of the bay, where a group of cocoa palms hung almost over the water, the sight of a thatched hut met his eye. In front of it, and anchored several hundred yards out in the cove, was a trim schooner, her sails furled and a white awning covering her deck. Here and there over the wide bay were small boats, in each of which he could see two and sometimes three black men, naked to the waist.

“They’re divin’ for sponges or tongin’ ’em,” said Andy to himself as the old geography pictures came into his mind. Before

he could feast his eyes further with the picture-like scene, he was startled to hear a voice. At the same moment a white man, in white duck and a Panama hat, stepped from the shade of the palms lining the beach.

"How 'd do?" exclaimed the man in a decided English accent. "Did you just alight in an aeroplane?"

"You saw me?" exclaimed Andy.

"I was on my schooner and watched you for a long time with the glass. Come across from Florida?"

"Yes," answered the boy. "What place is this?"

"One of the Grande Banks," replied the stranger, "generally speaking. To be precise, you have your choice of several local names. Mine, for this, is Palm Tree Cove, I believe."

"My name is Leighton—Andrew Leighton. I thought I 'd try it to see if I could. Now, I 've got to get word to my folks that I 'm all right, and get back."

Meanwhile the Englishman had shaken Andy's hand.

"That 's not so easy," he answered, laughing. "The place is uninhabited; it 's off the steamer route. I don't belong here; we 're

prospecting the pearl and sponge bottoms. I'm from Andros. We'll be leaving in a day or so. You can go with us. I'll send you to Nassau, or send word for you—you can cable."

"You live on Andros Island?"

"I have fruit lands there and sisal."

"I'm sure I'm obliged," began Andy.

"It's good of you. I haven't any money."

The man laughed.

"I shall be delighted to have you as my guest," he said, still smiling. "And if you are in a hurry, I'll take you over to-night."

"I'm not in a hurry to leave this," began Andy, sweeping his arm about to include the cameo-like bay. "But you can understand: I hadn't permission to come, and, if I had, I suppose my parents would be worrying until they heard from me."

"Not unlikely," said the man in white. "I think you ought to go at once, or send word. Any little excitement of this kind is enjoyable. If you don't mind, I'd like to have a look at your flying machine—I've never seen one, as you can imagine. I rarely go even to Nassau—lived on Andros twenty years."

Glad to act as showman, Andy led his new friend back along the beach to the *Pelican*. In

the short trip he related how he came to be in possession of the aeroplane, how it was made, and finally he told of his parents, his late uncle, and of Captain Anderson. Reaching the car he explained it in detail, and then while the Englishman stood back as if to feast his eyes on the wonder, Andy said:

“If you don’t mind, I ’ll have a bite of lunch and a drink.”

As if embarrassed, the stranger raised his hand.

“Excuse me, my boy—I might have known. Can’t you postpone your refreshment until we can reach my schooner?”

Andy thought a moment.

“I don’t like to leave the machine here—I think I ’ll make a little flight and take it around in the cove.”

“Excellent,” agreed the man. “I ’ll be proud,” he went on, with a smile and bowing, “to be host to both the aeroplane and the aviator. And I ’ll watch—”

A mischievous look came into Andy’s eyes. Some distance ahead of him the hard beach reached back over a gentle incline that made its way like a wide road between the fence-like cocoas.

“I ’ll have to get the car up there,” he said, “to get up momentum. Do you mind giving me a hand?”

“Delighted, I ’m sure,” answered the fruit grower. “It will probably be my first and last experience with such a vehicle.”

Andy’s twinkle spread into a smile. When the *Pelican* had been pushed to the top of the slope and was ready for a new flight, he crawled to his seat. The white-costumed man was backing away, watching every detail. As soon as he was seated, Andy loosened the cords holding the tin of gasoline on the extra seat and asked his affable host if he would put it aside where he might get it later.

“I ’d think you ’d carry it with you,” suggested the stranger, as he obligingly complied.

“I would,” answered Andy, “but I want the seat. Jump in.”

“Me?” exclaimed the man. “On that?”

“I just crossed the gulf stream, a thousand feet up,” answered the boy.

“I—I did n’t know it would carry two,” began the man, who seemed more surprised than alarmed.

“It has,” answered the boy. “Come on.”

The surprise of the man turned instantly

into open delight. He crawled into the seat, and almost before he was settled, the proud and now confident Andy had shot his pride and joy seaward, skimmed one low roller, and was mounting skyward as if the machine were elated over its extra burden.

It was not over a mile to the head of the cove and the cabin beneath the palms, but the conditions made a direct flight thither impossible. Assured of his ability to control the powerful machine, Andy sent her mounting up and up in a long spiral.

"Delightful!" said the man at his side at last. "I'm charmed."

To the boy's surprise, there was no trace of nervousness nor fear in his passenger's voice.

"I think we're nearly one thousand two hundred feet high now," said Andy.

"I think so, or more," was the passenger's answer. "Can you look about? The view is superb." The aeroplane, which had risen in circles above the cove, now commanded a wide view of white-margined islands, reefs, and channels. "Far over there to the left," went on the Englishman, "although you can scarcely see it, is a bit of rock with a strange history. It is known as Timbado Key."



“JUMP IN,” SAID ANDY.

There was a slight lurch of the car, and the passenger started.

“Anything wrong?” he exclaimed.

“Nothing,” answered Andy. “I was trying to look. But this Timbado?”

“It’s a story,” answered his companion—
“one that has never been written. I’ll tell it you this evening.”

Instantly, and for the first time since he had landed, the tragic tale of Ba, the colored man, rushed into Andy’s thoughts. Startled by his unexpected proximity to the scene of Ba’s horrible experience, his hand had moved and the machine had wavered. Then, as the fragmentary story came back to him, he recalled this important detail of it—the man who had sent the simple, half savage Ba to steal the great pink pearl was “an English captain who lived on Andros Island.”

“Thank you,” answered the boy at last.
“I’ll be glad to hear it, Mr.—”

“Pardon me,” said the man instantly;
“didn’t I mention my name? I am Captain Monckton Bassett.”

CHAPTER XVI

THE CANNIBAL KING AND THE PINK PEARL

The swift tropic night had fallen, and the black sky was aglow with winking stars—miniature moons that turned key, reef, and water into a phosphorescent glow. Out of the silence came only the weird songs of the black boatmen gathered about the camp fire at the hut under the palms. On the schooner the evening meal was over, and Andy sat almost lost in dreams, while his host drew on his after-dinner cigar.

When Andy and Captain Bassett had landed, after their aerial flight into the cove, it was nearly dusk. The boy suggested that he would at once dismantle his machine and take it aboard the schooner, to be carried to his host's home on Andros Island, and thence to Nassau and the steamer. After his nerve-wrecking flight in the afternoon, he did not feel equal to another sky voyage of perhaps one hundred and fifty miles.

At this, the Englishman made a peculiar request.

"I wish you would n't take it apart for a little while."

"Then it is n't convenient to sail to-night?" said Andy. "But, just as you like."

It had been agreed that the schooner was to set sail for distant Andros as soon as the moon rose.

"Yes," answered the man slowly. "But I've been thinking of something. I can't quite make up my mind—I'd like to talk to you about it after a bit. Then we'll go as we've arranged, if you like."

"Oh, it isn't that," exclaimed the boy. "Nothing would please me more than to stay here always. But you can see how it is—they'll all be worried. I've got to get to the telegraph as soon as possible and wire them I'm not lost in the sea."

"I understand," answered Captain Bassett. "It was thoughtless of me to ask it. Go ahead. We'll leave with the moon."

But instead of going ahead, the boy walked to his new-found friend's side.

"What was it?" he asked curiously.

"A crazy idea," answered his host, with a laugh. "Please forget it."

"I can't," said the boy decisively. "If you

have the slightest reason to have me stay here awhile, I know it is n't a crazy idea. Anyway, I won't consent to taking you away from your business on an hour's notice and unless it is convenient for you to go."

The man shrugged his shoulders.

"Coming or going is nothing to me," he replied. "I am here not because I am needed—my black overseer can be trusted with my business. But there are strange things in these faraway keys. For a time you and your flying machine set me thinking. I've dismissed the idea—"

"I have n't," interrupted Andy. "Whatever it was, if the *Pelican* was a part of it, she's goin' to stand there until you tell me what you had in mind."

The white-costumed man looked at the boy with a quizzical smile, appeared to be about to speak, and then only shook his head. He and the boy were yet standing by the ghostly planes of the aeroplane, on which the Englishman's hand rested as if the machine meant much to him.

"It's about Timbado Key, is n't it?" suggested Andy, at last.

"Yes," retorted Captain Bassett, startled.

“But how—Oh, yes, I remember: I told you it had a tragic story. You ’re a good guesser,” he concluded, smiling again.

“I ’m not guessing now,” went on the boy impulsively, and unable longer to restrain himself. “I know about Timbado and about Cajou.”

The man came toward him, a look of surprise on his face.

“I ’ve never met any white person who knew that,” he said at once. “What is it you know?”

The remark had escaped Andy unwittingly. He was embarrassed.

“I—I did n’t mean to speak yet,” he began.

“Why not?” retorted his companion. “What do you know?”

“I ’m awfully sorry I said that, Captain Bassett,” went on the boy slowly. “But I ’ll tell you after you tell me the real story.”

“Is n’t yours a real story?” laughed the Englishman.

“I ’m sure it is n’t,” answered Andy impulsively. “At least, I don’t want to talk of it now.”

“It must be uncomplimentary to someone,” suggested his friend.

The boy, still much confused, blurted out:

“It is.”

“Am I concerned?” asked Captain Bassett.

Andy looked at the man again. There was anything but a bad look in the Englishman’s face. His strong, sunburned countenance was set in feature, but the boy saw nothing more than the face of a man accustomed to giving orders and being obeyed. Yet, being in for it, the lad could not lie. Caught in his indiscretion, he only nodded his head.

“After supper, then, we’ll talk it over,” was the Englishman’s only comment.

“And,” added Andy, eager to show some appreciation of the man’s kindness to him, “we won’t take the machine apart until I know what you were figuring on.”

“As you like,” replied the man in quite another tone.

Nothing more was said until Captain Bassett’s after-dinner cigar was going well.

“Now,” he said, “before I tell you of what I was thinking and of Timbado Key, I’d like to hear what you know about the place—that is, if you like.”

“I don’t like it at all,” answered Andy in renewed confusion. “And I’m sure part of

what I 've been told is not true. But I 'll finish what I started, even if you think the less of me for it. I ain't much for carryin' tales."

"It may be true," was the Englishman's comment, as he settled down in his canvas deck chair and luxuriously drew on his Havana cigar.

With no further preface, Andy repeated the disjointed tale Ba, the colored man, had gradually revealed: how the Herculean negro had escaped from the jail in Nassau, how he had been carried away to Nassau practically a prisoner by Captain Bassett, how he and Nickolas and Thomas had been sent to steal the great pink pearl from King Cajou, how Ba had actually seen the jewel and was lashed so cruelly, and the unsolved mystery of what came after in Ba's escape and the disappearance of the other conspirators.

When he had finished, there was no immediate response from the man who presumably had sent two men to their death at the hands of an African cannibal—no denial. But Captain Bassett's cigar had gone out. The Englishman at last drew a match on the arm of his chair. As it flared up at the end of his cigar, the observant boy thought he could make out a smile on the

strong face of the accused man. Then it was dark and silent again.

“‘This nigger, Cajou,’” came at last through the half dark night from Captain Bassett’s chair—and in a voice devoid of either guilt or innocence—“‘is more than you have been told. So far as I know, I am the only white man who has visited his island and come away again. He is a king, in a way. He is also the best type of the pure blood African as he exists in our island world. How he came to be on Timbado, no one knows. Nor how he made about himself a settlement of others of his kind. You can find bits of old savagery in similar people on some of the other ‘out islands.’ But on Timbado, in Cajou’s realm (if you can call it that), there no doubt exist practices that you can find nowhere else but on the Congo.’”

“‘Cannibals?’” interrupted Andy, drawing his chair forward.

“‘Among other things,’” replied the speaker, “‘but, of course, only by report. We can imagine the rest. Also, by report, they are wreckers and pirates in a small way. By my own experience, I know they are thieves—Cajou an artful one.’”

“‘Six years ago,’” went on Captain Bassett,

“in an expedition such as I have made here, I visited the southern reefs of the Smaller Bank, north of Cajou’s island. As I told you, I am a fruit and sisal hemp grower on Andros. But, like everyone in the Bahamas, in the off season, I utilize my men sponging. And, as you will soon learn, sponging means possible pearls. Like the gold prospector in other lands, we Bahamans love to seek the unknown waters where always there is the possibility that we never quite realize—the Koh-i-noor of pearls; the perfect pink pearl that is to make us fortune and fame.”

“I understand,” assented the boy.

“As you can see,” continued the Englishman, “it is n’t an unideal fancy. Even here, in this beautiful cove, there is such a chance—” and the boy could almost see a smile. “But six years ago, idling as now in about the same kind of a sleepy place, I got my first sight of Cajou. In a leaky old ‘sponger,’ crowded with a cargo of half-naked subjects, he did us the honor of calling on us.”

“What ’d he look like?” broke in the entranced lad.

“Anything but a king,” went on the Englishman. “He was certainly eighty years old, gray

haired and thin, but not bent. He was stripped to the waist, his skin was oiled, and around his bony neck was a necklace of bits of pink conch shell. He also carried a spear that must have come from Africa.”

The boy's heart beat with excitement—this man and his subjects were only a few miles away.

“He did n't favor me with a personal call,” continued Captain Bassett, “but I did n't stand on ceremony. From what I had heard of the old man, he had a wonderful influence on hard working, honest colored men, and I did n't care to have him hanging around the bay. He arrived about sundown, and when I rowed up to the side of his boat, I decided not to go aboard. The fish-cleaning shed at the market in Nassau was perfume compared to the hold of Cajou's old hulk.

“By right, I had no control over the vicinity, but I had plenty of help with me, and I stayed only long enough to tell the king that I 'd kick a hole into the bottom of his boat if he was n't gone by morning. He left all right, sometime in the night, one of my crews of three blacks with him. As that was their own business, I had to stand it.”

The boy sighed. He had expected a dramatic clash.

“That was only the prelude,” went on the Englishman. “Three weeks later, when I had reached home again, my pearl bag not much heavier than when I set out, I learned something more. I had been near fortune and just missed it. Two days before Cajou visited our mooring, one of my crews had made the find I had been awaiting for years. The great pink pearl had been found, and the usual thing happened. My men turned conspirators and thieves and concealed it.”

Andy sprang to his feet.

“And that ’s how Cajou got it?”

“Precisely. One of the men confessed. The savage but clever Cajou probably got his charms working—like as not did it in all pearl fleets he could find. Anyway, he got three of my men, and you can be sure he got the pearl.”

“What ’d you do?” asked the boy eagerly.

“What could I do? Somehow it became known at once that I knew the facts. All the men who had been with me decamped overnight. It was useless to go to Nassau and the authorities. I had no proof and, besides, Timbado is far away. Later I did tell the facts to

the governor. He was good enough to tell me if I would locate the property and establish proof of ownership, he would attempt to recover it. He even looked up the location of Timbado on the official chart and asked me to tea. I was grateful and thanked him."

"Then you never even saw the pearl," said Andy.

"But I tried to," said the captain, shaking his head in the negative. "I judged it was worth while. So I took the trouble to sail all the way to Timbado and call on the king. I took six men with me—all colored, but not thieves—and we landed at daybreak. The place is worth going to see," explained the speaker. "It is n't much of an island. Including a coral reef that surrounds the key, it is about a mile across and almost circular. There is a circular beach of sand, but the main part of the island is a coral elevation with bluff-like sides—it resembles the hill on which Nassau is built.

"My men had no longing to go ashore, so I did n't insist. There was no delegation to welcome us, but I beached the boat and walked over to a group of thatched huts at the base of the bluff. Several men, clad mainly in rough palmetto hats, watched my approach. One of them,

fully clothed and weighing at least two hundred pounds, came forward. He spoke English, and was probably the secretary-of-war, as he carried a revolver in a belt."

Andy edged forward again.

"I told him I wanted to see the king, and he replied by asking if I had tobacco or rum. When I told him I was n't a trader and repeated that I wanted to talk to Cajou, he pointed at once to my boat and touched his revolver. He was so unsociable that I took the trouble to look over my own, and then I passed on.

"The collection of huts was a combination cook camp and slaughter pen. Decaying conchs was the predominating odor. But it was varied with the smell of rotten shark meat, a half-consumed shark hanging from a post in the center of a filthy court. One glance told me that Cajou's house was not here, for behind the odorous pens and the reeking cook pots, I had seen steps cut in the coral limestone bluff.

"These steps," went on Captain Bassett, after he had supplemented his expired cigar with a pipe, "were partly concealed under vines and dwarfed palms. After most of those about the beach huts had disappeared toward the top of the elevation, I followed. When I saw this,

it occurred to me at once that the summit would make a good cricket ground. Mainly, the place was solid, smooth limestone with some sand and sparse vegetation, and all sloping to the center, where there was a considerable pool or pond."

"Were n't you afraid?" broke in his auditor. But to this there was no reply.

"On the edge of the pool was a stockade, and in this a quadrangle of latania-roofed huts. On each side of an opening facing the water were two dead cocoa palms. From the top of each hung a mess of odds and ends: bones, shark heads, colored cloth, shells on long strings, that I knew meant royalty. I saw at once that the palace was at the lowest part of the basin—you could n't even see the tops of the dead palms from the sea.

"When I started down the slope, black men seemed to spring up from every few yards of the little palms that grew on the edge of the elevation. I counted thirty of them and stopped. The fat secretary-of-war was following me. As I got nearer, I saw something in the things hanging from the totem-like trunks that set me to thinking—"

"What was it?" asked the boy, breathlessly.

"Well," answered the Englishman, "you 've

heard the worst about Timbado. I guess it's true."

The boy drew back in horror.

"And you kept on?" he asked, breathing hard.

"There were a good many more than I thought there'd be," went on Captain Bassett, "but I'd served in the English army, part of the time in Afghanistan, and I thought I might as well. When I got to the open gate, I saw that the stockade surrounded the real town. It seemed the dormitory for women and children. I thought for a minute I'd seen enough and that my men might be getting anxious," went on the old soldier, sucking at his pipe, "but I didn't have much choice. The thirty or more full-grown men I had counted came crowding up behind, so I went in.

"All this time there wasn't a word said. Before I could make any explanation, the king appeared—old Cajou walked out of one of the huts, as thin and straight and gray as I first saw him. He had on a blue coat with brass buttons, a navigating officer's cap marked 'First Mate' in gold letters, and he carried a gold-headed cane. His pink shell necklace was there, too, hanging on his breast.

“The old man held out his hand, but my eyesight was poor.

“ ‘Good morning,’ I began. ‘I’ve come for my pink pearl.’

“I had a notion that he understood, but he shook his head.

“ ‘You don’t speak English,’ I went on.

“Again he shook his head. Then I began to have a little reason. My curiosity was satisfied. Manifestly, I had gone the limit. Numbers, at least, were against me, whether they were armed or not. Before anything could be attempted I whirled about, swung my arm to open a path, and, as the crowd behind me fell back, I walked out of the enclosure. A hubbub of voices rose behind me, but not a hand was raised against me. Indifference seemed the best weapon, and I strolled up to the edge of the plateau, passed down the steps and to the boat.”

“Then what?” urged the boy.

“I had got about as much as I expected. But I did not give up wholly. I sailed back home, and at last decided on one more attempt. It was a slim chance, but I took it. I have often regretted it. Your Ba was working for me then—his name then was Zaco. I coached Zaco and

two other men named Nickolas and Thomas to go to Timbado and pose as castaways—not as thieves. They were simply to discover, if possible, whether the pearl was still there or had been disposed of.

“Not one of them ever returned. Your story is the first account I ever had of their fate. Nickolas and Thomas are either there to-day as Cajou’s subjects, or they are dead. Zaco, of course, escaped—somehow. The marks he carries with him prove that he saw the pearl and that it was there at that time. I’ve felt that it has been there all these years. Now that we know it—” and he paused.

“What?” exclaimed his listener, every nerve atingle.

“Let’s go and get it—you and I and the aeroplane,” continued Captain Bassett calmly.

CHAPTER XVII

THE BIRD OF DEATH

Captain Bassett's yacht-like schooner did not sail that night. Long after the camp fire of the spongers on the beach had fallen into a glow, the Englishman and Andy were in talk in the owner's cabin. On the chart before them the compasses were often in play between a dot marked "Timbado Key" and the unnamed indentation in a long island, where the boy had written in pencil "Palm Tree Cove."

At seven o'clock the next morning, two of the black men had brought up the unloaded can of gasoline. Andy had been taken ashore to the *Pelican*, two of the more intelligent spongers had been detailed to assist him, and the schooner was heading out of the cove, its owner on the after deck waving his Panama to the boy on shore.

A box of cloth, screws, wire, a hammer and saw, candles, tin pans, and three bamboo fishing poles had been sent ashore with the young aviator. Before the schooner had rounded the point and laid a course to the west, the ope-

rator of the aeroplane was busy. His shirt sleeves rolled up, barefooted and hatless, the boy did not seem to mind the semi-tropic sun. After a solitary luncheon he was at his task again. At three o'clock he paused—the *Pelican* a weird and picturesque sight, her tanks newly filled, her oil cups freshly primed. Whatever her new mission, she was undoubtedly ready for another flight.

Andy's fishermen assistants viewed the altered machine with silent awe. When they had helped to wheel it into an advantageous location for a new start and had been dismissed, they hurried away, and the boy was alone. From his actions, the hours were dragging. Four and five o'clock passed with no signs of a new flight. The impatient Andy made constant references to the sun and his watch, with now and then little alterations in the aeroplane's new equipment.

Frequently the boy also consulted a slip of paper.

"North, northwest," he would repeat, "and twenty-five miles. At a minute and a half a mile, that's thirty-seven and one-half minutes."

Thirty-eight minutes before Captain Bas-

sett's calculation of sundown, at 6:35 P.M., the eager boy at last sprang into his seat, set his brake, turned on his power, and in thirty seconds the low-hanging palm leaves behind him, fluttering before his propellers, the now picturesque *Pelican* was skimming over the wide reach of Palm Tree Cove.

At one o'clock that afternoon Captain Bassett's schooner was tacking off Timbado Key. When it dropped anchor off the makeshift of a beach village that its navigator had visited six years before, a few blacks emerged from the hovels. But no one on the schooner came ashore, and in the boat there were no signs of activity. The white-costumed Englishman sat and smoked under the awning. By mid-afternoon the beach was thick with a curious group.

When the sun was low in the west, a few minutes before seven o'clock, a small boat shot out from the idle, anchored schooner. As it grounded on the beach, the semi-savage blacks who had watched the strange boat all afternoon, moved forward. Captain Bassett, in spotless white, sprang ashore. He paused only to light a fresh cigar, and then, ignoring the motley straggling group, he walked quickly to the steps leading to the plateau.

Here, with only a glance over the sloping sides of the basin and the stagnant pool at its bottom—its heavy waters already iridescent in the dying sun—he strode rapidly toward the stockade. As he had seen it before, the king's home still stood—the signs of decay more evident, but the totem palm trunks still erect.

No one blocked his passage, but he did not enter the gate. Still swaying on the palm trunks, he saw that which sent a chill through him. He also saw, almost above, but apparently guarding the gate, the big black who had accosted him on the beach years before. The man was heavier, there was a brutish kind of fear on his face, but he yet carried in his belt the one revolver the Englishman had seen on the island.

“Tell the great thief Cajou the white man is here.”

Captain Bassett uttered these words in a tone that made the big black start.

“Him no walk,” was the answer in a hesitating voice.

“Tell the great thief Cajou that the white man brings death.”

“Him sick,” faltered the swarthy guardian.

Within the shadow of the filthy stockade

court, other men could now be seen. The white man could see the glare of eyes as if beasts were crouching in the fast-gathering night.

“Tell the great thief Cajou,” went on the white man—his tone unchanged, cold and imperative, “that to-night comes the Bird of Death. He who was robbed of his pearl, to-night brings fetich; to-night, the white man brings death to the women and children of thieves; to-night, out of the south, he commands the Bird of Death.”

As he spoke, the Englishman observed almost concealed behind those in the enclosure, the old African. He was bent now, and as the silent assembly fell back to give the grizzled savage space, the white man saw that all he had said had been heard and understood. Two women supported the ruler of Timbado. Shaking them aside, he felt his way to the gate on his cane.

“White man come—white man go. No come—no go more.”

“The great thief Cajou hears,” interrupted the unmoving man in white. “To-night, the white man brings fetich; to-night, out of the sky, he brings death to those who steal and lie and to the women and children of those who lie—”

The tottering chief lunged forward on his stick as if to grasp the white man. But the latter did not move.

“Cajou no thief,” snarled the black. “Him no white man pearl.”

Throwing his head back, the Englishman placed his hands to his mouth and called loudly into the now shadowed night.

“Come, Bird of Death,” he cried. Then, with a sweep of his right arm toward the south, he shouted: “Behold!”

Sweeping majestically toward the palm totems out of the already starry night, came an object with the whirr of a flock of vultures. Like a great bird, the descending shape already spread its monstrous wings over the black pool. Its long tail could be seen moving against the starry sky, while the eyes and throat of its far-extended head seemed to belch fire and smoke.

Back upon each other crowded those about Cajou. Alone stood the old man, shaking and aghast. Then out of the mouth of the giant bird came a cry of rage and the hiss of a snake. Wails and cries of fear rent the air; groveling on their knees, the occupants of the stockade tried to hide their heads; even the great black threw himself behind the wall. Then the an-

gry blood-red eyes of the Bird of Death struck toward the group, and even the doughty Cajou reeled backward.

“Stop!” shouted the white man. “Stop, Bird of Death! Go!” he cried.

As if balked of its prey, the great creature of the air seemed to pause. Then, with an almost human snarl, it shot to the left, circled over the pool and began to mount the skies in apparent flight.

For a moment the sobs and cries of the prostrate were all that could be heard. The ruler of the tropic key still stood, but shaking in terror.

“White man go,” he mumbled at last. But his defiance was gone. “Cajou no got white man’s pearl.”

“You lie!” exclaimed the Englishman. Then he held out his hand. “Give!” he commanded. His tone seemed to wound the black man. “No?” he added fiercely, as Cajou only cringed.

“Cajou no pearl, no thief,” at last began the African.

“Come, Bird of Death,” cried the white man once more. “Eat the women and children of the great thief. Come!”



“COME, BIRD OF DEATH!”

As he spoke, he could see the blood-red eyes turned toward him again; then he saw the points of fire dip, and he knew the indistinguishable object was once more hurtling toward the stockade.

There were new cries of terror. Then the hiss and snarl high above sounded again. Bigger grew the glaring eyes of the Bird of Death, and then out of its gaping throat came a stream of fire. The roar of the returning object swept before it.

"Eat black man; eat black man!" came a voice out of the hollow sky.

Amid a hundred shrieks, a terror-stricken form threw itself at the white man's feet.

"Cajou lie; Cajou lie," it wailed. "White man make stop."

"Come, Bird of Death!" roared the iron-nerved Englishman.

"Eat black woman, eat black baby!" fell again from the clouds.

One more look, and the prostrate Cajou caught at the buttons on his faded coat, tore the garment loose at the neck, and struck out his palzied hand.

"Stop!" commanded the man in white, as he shot up his arm to stay the avenging bird. He

could barely see the old man; but he felt the outstretched hand. Grasping the object in it, he found it still attached to a cord. With a snap he tore it loose. His fingers closed on what he knew was a small skin bag. Then with a thrill he felt within the bag a pear-shaped object. It required no look to tell him what it was.

“Begone!” he cried. “Cajou saves his people.”

As he spoke, he discharged his revolver over the heads of the prostrate subjects of the outwitted black man, and there was an answering shout from the fiery Bird of Death as it swept over the stockade. The Fiend of the Skies had been thwarted once more by the fetich of the white man and, with another hiss of rage, its yawning throat yet spitting flames and smoke, the Bird of Death turned and disappeared seaward.

When it had passed, and Cajou and his people looked again for the all-powerful white man who had saved them, he was gone. None followed the retreating ghostlike form of the fetich maker, and as Captain Bassett felt his way down the bluff steps, he could see fading the red eyes of the air monster.

On the beach once more, his faithful men and boat ready for him, he paused, drew the little bag from his pocket and struck a match. There was but one glance, and he threw the match from him. Cajou had not deceived him this time. The great pink pearl had come back to its owner.

When the *Pelican* sailed away from Palm Tree Cove on that eventful evening, thirty-seven and one-half minutes before sunset, the spongers, left in open-mouthed wonder, soon began an important task. Dry driftwood and fallen palm trees were collected until it was wholly dark. Then fires were started on the beach in two places, to the right and left of the *Pelican's* starting place. A few minutes after eight o'clock, out of a louder and louder whirr in the starlit skies, with a rush as of a rising wind, the aeroplane darted beachward.

In the shadows, the daring young aviator, stiff in muscle and worn with strain, landed in the shallow water. As if newly alarmed, the waiting spongers hung back. But the tired boy sprang into the water, grasped the sinking machine, and in a few moments a dozen willing hands had drawn it high on the white sand. With no attempt to dry his clothes, and with

only a glance at his watch in the glare of the beach fires, the exhausted boy threw himself on the sand alongside the aeroplane and was soon unconscious.

When he awoke, it was day, and Captain Bassett was standing over him.

"Come to the schooner," said the Englishman kindly, "get some breakfast and a bath and finish your sleep in bed."

Dazed for a moment, Andy rubbed his eyes, and then sprang into a sitting posture.

"Did you get it?" he cried eagerly.

The captain smiled, nodded his head, and then looked knowingly toward the spongers just departing for their day's work.

"I understand," exclaimed the boy jubilantly. "It was a peach of an idea. The old *Pelican* was all right, was n't she?"

Again Captain Bassett smiled and assisted the stiff boy to his feet.

"The idea was all right, but you did the business. She don't look so awful now, does she?" and he pointed toward the still bedraggled aeroplane.

Both broke into laughter. Drooping on the beach, lay the *Pelican's* improvised neck and bird head made of lashed bamboo poles. The

two suspended lanterns covered with red calico curtains from the schooner were far from deceptive in the sunlight. The band of red cloth on a crude frame beneath these, behind which had hung balls of coal oil soaked rags (the throat of the marvelous bird) was sagging in the sand.

"Here 's where I touched off the balls," explained Andy, still chuckling with amusement. "My oil string fuse ran through these wire loops."

"When the wind blew the flames down," said the captain, "it was like a dragon spitting fire. And that yell of yours! It was n't much like a bird—it was most grewsome. Andy," he added suddenly and seriously, "of course, it is n't necessary to say you 've done a big thing for me."

"You don't need to begin that," exclaimed the boy at once. "You 've helped me and are goin' to help me some more. That 's enough. But I 'd like to see the pearl."

Cautiously the Englishman took the bag from his pocket. As the boy's eyes fell on the lustrous, pale rose-colored gem, he caught his companion's arm. In the shape of a flattened pear and almost an inch and a half long, the tropic jewel seemed to radiate a glow of life.

“What ’s it worth?” whispered the dazed boy.

“Twenty years of isolation in this desolate world,” said the suddenly sobered Englishman. “In money, it has no price. It is not for sale.”

There was no more rest for Andy that morning. When the *Pelican* had been taken apart and loaded on the schooner and Captain Bassett’s crews of spongers had been embarked in their small boats, it was noon. While luncheon was served under the awning, the schooner passed out of the cove on her way to Andros Island.

Physically exhausted and his nerves unstrung, Captain Bassett put Andy in his bunk at once. When he awoke it was dark, the schooner was cutting through a moonlit sea and the boy knew it was late in the night. When he awoke again it was day and the schooner was tacking among almost countless islands.

A little later Andros Island was in sight. Then a heavily-laden schooner, freighted with baled sisal hemp and crates of oranges and pineapples, was hailed by the incoming schooner.

“It ’s one of my boats,” explained Captain Bassett, “on her way to Nassau. We ’ll send your cablegram on it.”

"Why not put me aboard?" asked Andy, again lively and full of vim.

"It can't well take the aeroplane," explained the Englishman. "Besides, I want to take you to Nassau myself. I'll see you properly started for your own country."

That was why the daring young adventurer was some days in the rear of his cablegram. When, in a few days, he did reach the interesting historic old town of Nassau, he was forced to accept several more favors from his kindly host. He saw no way of escaping a loan sufficient to cover his passage by steamer and rail back to Valkaria by way of Lake Worth, and to pay the freight bill on his aeroplane.

"But I'll return it," insisted Andy.

"As you like," responded his friend, "if you'll bring it yourself, and your father and mother, and spend a winter with me on Andros."

"And Ba?" added the boy.

"I'll take care of him as long as he lives, if he'll come," was the Englishman's answer.

When the big Florida-bound steamer had made her way out past Hog Island and was in the channel roll, the boy went below to inspect his cabin. Pinned to the pillow on his bed was

an envelope addressed: "Mr. Andrew Leighton—to be opened at sea."

Tearing it open, a narrow strip of blue paper dropped in Andy's hands. It read: "Royal Bank of Nassau. Pay to Andrew Leighton or order £1,000. Monckton Bassett."

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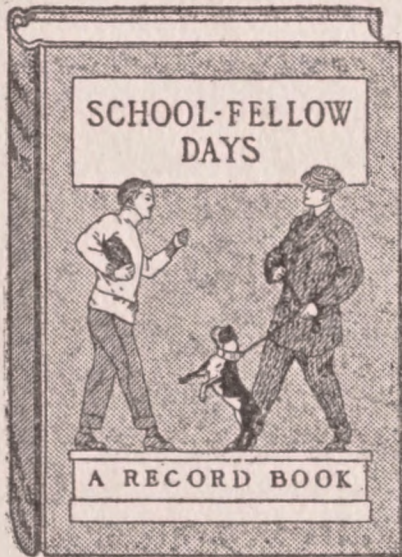
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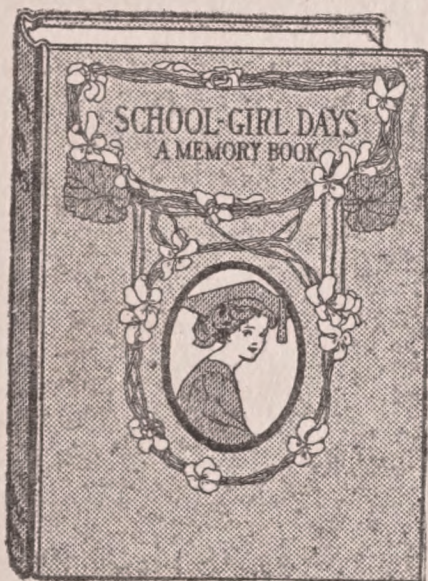
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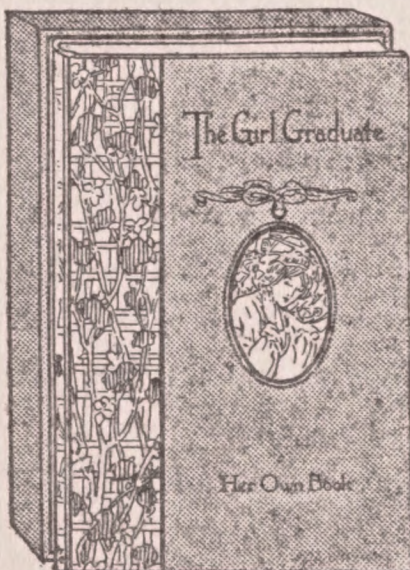
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